

THE MAKING OF BEAUTY: AESTHETIC SPACES IN THE FICTION OF D. H.  
LAWRENCE, MURIEL SPARK, AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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August 2013

Major Subject: English

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation rethinks textual images of the other's beauty, depicted in works by D. H. Lawrence, Muriel Spark, and Virginia Woolf, whose fascination with the other, called by this dissertation the beloved, urged them to inscribe the beloved's original beauty in texts. Their works make perceptible the singularity of the beloved, while revealing the writers' predicament in translating the beloved's ineffability in texts. Taking the untranslatability of the beloved into consideration, this dissertation traces the ways in which these writers' texts capture the beloved's original beauty at moments of revelation, related to epiphanies entering the terrain of literary modernism. My study thereby scrutinizes the dynamics of images of beauty and their impacts on art and politics in the context of modernism. In doing so, I argue that the texts I consider express the beloved's singularity in challenge of the beautified images that many other artists invented for self-directed purposes in the early and mid-twentieth century.

First, I explore Lawrence's creation of aesthetic spaces in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) in keeping with his desire for making palpable visual spectacles through the text. Analyzing how this ambition helped to create the novel's aesthetic scenes, I would like to define Lawrence as an aesthete whose aspiration lay in expressing the beauty of things. Then, I discuss Spark's affection for her characters and her desire to visualize the figure's originality in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963). Considering Spark in relation to both modernists and Fascists, I propose that her making of the image of her character breaks away from Fascism's

aestheticization of human figures. Finally, I investigate Woolf's love for words by focusing on "The Duchess and the Jeweller" (1938), a short story written for expressing various modes of beauty in words. Drawing to the represented link between words and smell, considered the most "wasteful" sense, I examine how the sensory medium makes perceptible intrinsic qualities of words, and argues that her depiction of words, linked to smell, reveals the anti-utilitarian nature of words, unconstrained by a craftsman's manipulation of words.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The loved being is recognized by the amorous subject as “atopos” (a qualification given to Socrates by his interlocutors), i. e., unclassifiable, of a ceaselessly unforeseen originality.

— Roland Barthes, 1978

“To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have—to want and to want—how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again!”

— Virginia Woolf, 1927

#### **Embodied Beauty: A Lover’s Sign**

Roland Barthes makes visible a lover’s unique response to the beloved in his 1978 book, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*. The lover responds to the beloved’s “atopos,” meaning the singular, unique, and the unclassifiable, which only a lover can recognize in the beloved, willingly hoping to praise it. While others attribute “character traits” to the other as much as they like, a lover follows a different path. Insofar as one remains at all moments as a lover, the lover may refuse to classify the beloved, because any definition, language, and description would diminish “the other’s brilliant originality,” reducing the loved being to a stereotype (Barthes 1978; 35). Watching the beloved singled out for praise, a lover finds only a few signs to express the beloved’s beauty but such a “stupid” word as “adorable!” (Barthes 1978; 18), which demands the lover’s lavish consumption of feelings and senses toward the beloved.

The difficulty in expressing the beloved's beauty, as Barthes explains it, has also afflicted those who wish to confer their adoration of works of art without reducing the work to a mere type. The second epigraph, which comes from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), represents a painter's heartbroken awareness that no sign can perfectly express the loved one's "atopos," and, for the human artist, it is hard to grasp the deeper truths of the beloved. Drawing the portrait of Mrs. Ramsay in Woolf's novel, the artist Lily Briscoe endeavors to visualize the ineffability of her beloved on the material surface, but she finds it difficult to produce the ideal form that will express her feeling about Mrs. Ramsay. Indeed, Lily gets in trouble with her vulnerability as a human creator, whose bodily conditions lend her only limited abilities for perception and expression. No matter how much she struggles to capture the sudden revelation of beauty, she cannot eschew the fact that "the urgency of the moment always missed its mark" because "words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low" (181). Lily's inward cry—"to want and not to have"—makes audible the mixture of the artist's desire and despair in confronting the difficulties in expression, or "the crisis of the sign—the gap between signifier and signified, which Derrida and others have termed the myth of presence in Western metaphysics" (Stewart 1993; 17).<sup>1</sup>

If the human limitations on the process of creating a work of art are unavoidable, then what is an artist able to do? Facing this challenge posed by desire and the body, Lily wrestles with the temptation to give up the painting, and even imagines that "beauty would roll itself up," involuntarily shaping forms and filling up the empty space of her

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London, 1993).

canvas (183). As the book's ending suggests, however, the emptiness of the canvas cannot but stay unresolved until the painter takes an action by marking a line in the center of the painting. The novel ends with Lily's aesthetic achievement: she had feared that her painting "would be hung in the attics" and "it would be destroyed," but going toward the ending, she releases herself from these anxieties, and "take[s] up her brush again" to shape a form in the canvas—the line in the center (211).

It is less important to this argument to question whether the aesthetic form is appropriate to express the object it represents than to construe the line as the mark made by the lover in search of her beloved. Lily's aesthetic form gains significance not because it precisely reflects the other's qualities, but because it serves as the amorous subject's sign of love made solid on the textual surface. This sign, then, suggests the lover's efforts to seek after the loved being: in attempting to express the beauty of the beloved, the artist encounters challenges in pain, but admits them, and tries to pursue the beloved again and again. Construed in this way, the embodied sign becomes "the imprint of a caressing or destroying hand," as Susan Sontag says in *Against Interpretation* (1964), where she attends to "a physiognomy of the work, or its rhythm," rather than meanings themselves (28).<sup>2</sup> By giving "palpable forms to consciousness," the text makes "something singular explicit," and exhibits the individuality of an artist's

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Dell P, 1964). Sontag borrows from Raymond Bayer, who wrote "What each and every aesthetic object imposes upon us, in appropriate rhythms, is a unique and singular formula for the flow of our energy. . . Every work of art embodies a principle of proceeding, of stopping, of scanning; an image of energy or relaxation, the imprint of a caressing or destroying hand which is [the artist's] alone" (qtd. in Sontag 1964, 28).

means of giving style, identified as “the principle of decision in a work of art” or “the signature of the artist’s will” (Sontag 1964; 29, 32).<sup>3</sup>

Like Lily’s painting, a verbal text comes to have signs of the writer’s desire and love for the beloved in the textual surface when he or she tries to explore the loved one. The surface of the text commingles the lover’s desire, ambition, despair, and fatigue, all of which are concerned with an artist’ act of creation, motivated by his or her willingness to explore and articulate what the lover calls the beloved. It seems remarkable that narratives come to embody various modes of love because an act of love calls for sensory experiences: a lover desires to see, touch, hear, and smell his or her beloved. Indeed, unlike painting, sculpture, music, theater and other art forms, the verbal arts remain the most difficult medium to express such sensual contents. While Lily’s line constructs a “significant form,” a term coined by Clive Bell to articulate significant relationships among lines, shapes, colors and other sensory perceptions, a narrative allows no room for such an abstract form and actual sensory contents because verbal texts demand more specified descriptions of the referents: unlike a painting that can evoke an intensive feeling by means of an abstract form, a narrative requires an expanded control over the entire structure of the work.<sup>4</sup> The text, however, defeats the

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<sup>3</sup> Barthes is also talking about an artist’s “signature” marked in the work of art. See Barthes’s *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985). By the concept of an artist’s signature, Barthes meant to claim the autonomous play of a verbal sign, independent of the subject. He says, “We can transfer this instability of the major signifier (the proper name) to the signature” (235); “this infinity of the signature, which releases its appropriative link, for the further the support extends, the further the signature is removed from the subject” (235-36).

<sup>4</sup> See Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914).



writer' will-to-manipulation, manifesting itself as a disturbing space, where "the generative idea" of a signifier "is worked out in a perpetual interweaving" (Barthes 1975; 64).<sup>5</sup> It is no longer a complete system sustaining "the illusion of unity," but a certain kind of body, compared to "our erotic body" letting the subject be "dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web" (Barthes 1975; 17, 62).

If writers yearn to express the beloved's singularity, how could they depict it without reducing the referent to a mere stereotype? If the writers aspire to shape limitless and amorphous beauty in a material text, what aesthetic forms might be imagined? In seeking to express the beloved's originality, some twentieth century British writers attempted to shape the particular image of the beloved in the surface of their texts. I describe this act of creation as a kind of textual embodiment. Curious about the inner essence of the beloved's beauty manifested in its appearance, the writers tried to explore the interior dimension of the other, whether it was a human beloved, or a thing, or an amorphous subject, or an artwork.<sup>6</sup> They undertook the process of materialization in writing, and invented certain ways to make perceptible an intangible power or transcendent soul that seems to be associated with the beloved's singularity. In other words, to shape a figure's original beauty, deemed to be the ineffable, "something one might have felt" but cannot express in "voiced words" (Laurence 1), the twentieth

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<sup>5</sup> See Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> In *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes is talking about a human beloved, but in my dissertation, I place human beings, fictional characters, things, works of art, and words in the category of "the beloved" or "the other". From the term "the other", postcolonial theory perceives the traces of imperial power, racism, and Eurocentrism. My use of "the other" intends to refer to the ineffably enchanting beloved, instead of the colonized other in the relation between the "superior" subject and the "inferior" object.

century writers sought to devise a method for conveying what they perceived from the beloved through texts. These writers paid attention to the other's invisible insideness, presuming that the hidden domain of depth might contain substantial sources of beauty. They in turn tried to endow the shapeless beauty with some "fleshiness" in depicting the beloved, so as to make the text possess solid forms of beauty: it was the modern writers' desire to make permanent what they felt in their relation with the other. By endowing a given space of a text with various sense perceptions and physical sensations, these writers inscribed moments of beauty's revelation through which a reader can perceive glimpses of something intangible, and original in the other, understood as the beloved.

Embodied images are presented among a range of Victorian writings from the work of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Anthony Trollope, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Thomas Hardy, to that of Oscar Wilde. With the development of medical science, evolutionary biology, psychology and physiology, the material body came to be seen as the epitome of insideness in the nineteenth century. In Victorian Britain, this conception of the body as the location of human essence motivated literary writers to adopt a mode of representation: many of them described the body as an active agency that manifests soul, consciousness, feelings, emotions, and desires. Such a representation enables a reader to recognize the self within via the outside like the face or the skin, because the fleshy surfaces can be regarded as the tablet of the mind.<sup>7</sup> This kind of embodiment takes the belief that the relation between the

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<sup>7</sup> For Victorian discussions of embodiment, see William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008); Mary Ann O'Farrell, *Telling Complexions: The Nineteenth-Century English Novel and the Blush* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997);

surface and the depth is “less in terms of abstract distance than proximate contact” (Cohen 2008; 25).

In defining the characteristic of this type of embodiment, it is useful to recall the case of Dorian Gray, a handsome young man whose beautiful face becomes the subject of Basil Hallward’s portrait. In Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), the portrait of Dorian refers to a widely shared fantasy about beauty and ugliness among the readers in the late nineteenth century. Dorian’s image on the canvas displays the culturally produced link between beauty and youth, confirming a familiar image of dandyism, a shared taste of beauty among the fin-de-siècle decadents. The projected images on the canvas reveal “the ideologically constructed identities of the late nineteenth century,” as Audrey Jaffe cogently argues: the embodied beauty and ugliness on the portrait has to do with “the image making of identity politics,” and in the text, Dorian is imagined as “neither person nor, exactly, character,” but “a ‘type’ or the ‘visible symbols’ of the age (296). Dorian’s beauty, codified on the canvas, “lacks specificity” because this embodied image seems to be a general model of beauty, desired by the members of society in the context of the late-nineteenth century (Jaffe 296). In this regard, the embodied images in the work of Wilde tend to represent a character as a social member imitating the consensual idea of beauty.

What I concentrate on here is not the Victorian type of embodiment but a new kind of embodiment, a textual embodiment, which I hope to define as a writer’s shaping of an aesthetic scene that engages a collection of sense perceptions and moments of

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*Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, edited by Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

beauty's revelation, playing as the road to the secret of the beloved's concealed interiority. This textual space becomes a particular locus where multiple sense images are bestowed upon the beloved at a moment of revelation, tellingly, a moment that sheds a light on the beloved's "atopos" or singularity. In this location, even a formless figure acquires a kind of "fleshiness" because the sense images rendered by the author tend to give the referent physical qualities. The writers' rendition of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste stimulates the implied readers to perceive the fullness of the figure, by virtue of making it kinetic and lively as though it were an animated being, rather than a static and immobile object. One remarkable effect of the textual embodiment is that the beloved appears as a vital human figure or a lively entity: each of their "atopos" comes to be expressed in the space of verbal texts, despite the other's intrinsic ineffability that produces the fundamental difficulty in representation. By engaging the beloved's "atopos," the text itself becomes "atopic" (outside-of-place) and stays "unconcerned with the integrity" of it (Barthes 1975; 11). The text creates a unique surface in which linguistic signs play as "singular unit, magic nomad," undoing the canonical structures of the language and the dominant ideologies making us believe that one is able to manage verbal signs and a writing itself (Barthes 1975; 33).

Taking the untranslatability and ineffability of the beloved into consideration, my dissertation traces the ways in which the novelists' pursuit of their beloved appears on the surface of texts. This dissertation focuses on three modern British novelists D. H. Lawrence, Muriel Spark, and Virginia Woolf, arguing for a rethinking of the value of aesthetic scenes they wrote in their texts as an attempt to embody the figure's beauty at

moments of revelation. In spite of their unique styles, each writer's scenes of beauty which invite the moments of revelation share double-edged meanings. They bring to light the singularity of the other, which has been made obscure by the laws of Fascism and consumer capitalism. At the same time, the textual spaces uncover the writers' difficulties in translating the ineffability of their beloveds. This twofold significance of embodied beauty and its impacts on art will be discussed throughout the following chapters of this dissertation. This dissertation, then, is an attempt to explore the dynamics of the moments of beauty in their relation with the other's singularity and artistic creation.

My use of the term "moments of beauty" perhaps recalls moments of epiphany, described as a spiritual manifestation of beauty by Stephen Dedalus, James Joyce's character in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>8</sup> In the context of literary modernism, a fiction of narrative tends to capture intense moments of beauty, called epiphanies, in which a spiritual revelation of beauty occurs, and an observer is powerfully affected by the sudden manifestation such a moment gives rise to. As the words like "sudden" and "spiritual" intimate, epiphany refers to an evanescent moment of "divine revelation," or a moment of "overwhelming significance instead of a gradual temporal progress" (Nichols 3). With emphasis on the work of Joyce, Woolf, Marcel Proust, Thomas Wolfe, and William Faulkner, Morris Beja's *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (1971), a prominent study on aesthetic modernism and epiphany, defines epiphany in Joycean terms as "a showing forth, an illumination, a revelation," and proceeds to

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<sup>8</sup> See James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, a posthumously published novel, used in composing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1917).

unfold how such moments of revelation enlarged the writers' imagination for artistic creation (15). As Beja points out, epiphanies became significant events by which a modern artist could create forms of beauty by raising particular insights in the mind of a fictional observer.

In elaborating fictionally represented moments of beauty in my dissertation, I will scrutinize these moments in relation to other modernists' epiphanies, as one type of revelation of beauty occupying the terrain of literature during the early twentieth century. On the one hand, my dissertation argues that the moments of beauty in works of Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf keep the remnants of epiphanies imagined by their artistic ancestors or contemporaries such as Walter Pater, Clive Bell, Joyce, and Proust. Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf had a fascination with epiphanic imagery employed by others, and adopted some of their techniques, as I shall discuss later. This study, meanwhile, puts emphasis on the difference between two types of moments: the three writers' moments of "atopos," and the epiphanies imagined by Pater, Joyce, Pound, and Woolf herself. Suffice it to say here that the modernists' epiphanies tend to record the culmination of an artist figure's vision for an artwork, but the moments of "atopos" I examine draw our attention to a writer's ongoing pursuit of the beloved and search of aesthetic forms that may contain the beloved's original beauty. Such moments thereby allow us to perceive the writer's pleasure and pain involved in the process of making an artwork, revealing his or her oscillation between the accessible material surface and the distant and non-material domain of depth. Highlighting such differences between two types of moments, my dissertation considers the aesthetic functions of the moments of

beauty, which are distinguished from epiphanies, and serve to create a new kind of aesthetic space in texts.

Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf oscillated between their resistance to forming their beloved in representation and their responsibility for shaping the figure, but the will-to-love motivated each one to find some unique ways to express the beloved's beauty in the space of narrative. Each of these writers was in love. Lawrence loved Paul Cézanne's paintings of apples, for example. Spark found a way to love her characters, even if the characters look far from lovable from other people's viewpoints. Woolf resisted being a utilitarian user of words because she loved words themselves. The surfaces of their texts consequently incorporate the marks of love, making visible the writers' pleasure and pain of loving and representing the other. As the marks of a lover's desire, the embodied space for beauty, which engages the moment of revelation, makes a feast of sense perceptions. While narratives lack actual sensory experiences, the particular moments they created in their texts reveal each writer's efforts to register multiple senses in the texts, including tactile and olfactory feelings, as if they prove the lover's desire to touch and smell the other.

Obliged to be lovers, Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf longed to perceive their beloved as a whole, dreaming of "total union with the loved being," described as a lover's mode in Barthes's 1978 book (226). To be united to the loved being, Lawrence thought of deep touch as essential: his fictional lovers thus undergo the process of learning the significance of touch, and transgress a world governed by visual culture. In the postwar context, marked by a convergence between explicit condemnation of an

artist's pursuit of beauty and relentless broadcasting of the benefits that accrue to the physically attractive,<sup>9</sup> Spark detected a cultural phenomenon functioning to suppress an individual's freedom, self-esteem, and love for others: the schizophrenic distinction between body and soul. Hoping to restore a person's original character, which bears on both physical and spiritual qualities, Spark envisioned fictional moments that accomplish the free flux between appearance and inwardness. Towards the marriage between the lover and the beloved, Woolf wished to erase the egoistic self, dreaming of the world without self. The strains in the relationship between the lover and the beloved were growing more and more apparent since Woolf was often driven to the impulse to entirely surrender herself to the other (even death), rather than sustaining the tension between the two.<sup>10</sup> Yet, despite such an imbalance in her own life, Woolf's imagination of the world

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<sup>9</sup> The culminating phase of this convergence has commenced in the 1970s with the rise of lookism and visual culture. For example, Douglas Mao explains that the period is marked by "the highly charged mythology of reward surrounding those involved in the production of images, above all the celebrities whose faces and bodies provide those images' fundamental material" (Mao 2003; 193). Conscious of possible disparities between beauty and justice, in fact, many critics have criticized the conditions of visual and other aesthetic pleasures since the postwar era. For example, Laura Mulvey's 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" investigates a certain incompatibility between beauty and justice: a radical inequality between men and women, represented in Hollywood film wherein "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (750). As Mulvey's study reminds us, the media's intensification produced the pervasiveness of this mystification, while remaking "a world ordered by sexual imbalance," in which "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (750).

<sup>10</sup> One of the most pioneering studies in this field is James Naremore's *The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973). Naremore's book discusses how Woolf's works de-center the mastery of "I" in the relation between subjects (human agents or individuals, subsumed by the general term "self") and objects (things, beings, or external entities).



without self remains a landmark of her art, revealing her regret of utilitarianism that labels a lover's devotion to his or her beloved as a senseless act of waste.

Togetherness, wholeness, and unity are now often associated by a host of critics with a romanticized fiction or a rather dangerous nostalgia for a utopian notion of community. Furiously dismissing the idea of oneness, these critics insist that the notion of togetherness, wholeness, and unity have invented such ideologies as Englishness, anti-Semitism, and Fascism, among others.<sup>11</sup> Such worries are understandable when we consider that the concept of oneness fueled the engine of totalitarian movements early in the twentieth century, constituting the national form of racism, such as Nazism in Germany, as Hannah Arendt traces its emergence in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

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<sup>11</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), first published in 1983. Anderson's book explains the concept of imagined communities, arguing that a nation is a socially constructed fiction, imagined by those who believe themselves to belong to that group. According to Anderson, a nation is "an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (224). For comprehensive studies of the fiction of Englishness, see Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996); Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999). In *Maps of Englishness*, Gikandi focuses on "the function of narratives of identity and alterity in the constitution of English identity in the imperial and postimperial age" (Gikandi 7-8). Baucom's *Out of Place* examines the cultural formation of Englishness by tracing some historical, epistemological, and theoretical grounds that invoke postcolonial modes of cognition. For example, Baucom analyzes John Ruskin's writings, said to record Ruskin's "proleptic nostalgia" for the past "greatness" of England (51). Paul Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005) discusses the new mode of imperial domination, emerging since September 11, 2001, and spreading throughout America and Britain. Gilroy begins his discussion of "the resurgent imperial power of the United States" by mentioning the nation's orientation toward homogeneity, rather than diversity. Gilroy argues, "Multicultural society seems to have been abandoned at birth. Judged unviable and left to fend for itself, its death by neglect is being loudly proclaimed on all sides. The corpse is now being laid to rest amid the multiple anxieties of the 'war on terror'" (1).

(1958).<sup>12</sup> The togetherness imagined by Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf should not be identified as the totalitarian desire toward uniformity, although some readers may connect their pursuit of oneness with their unhealthy taste for utopianism or totalitarianism.<sup>13</sup> This is because these writers' desire for oneness is aroused in pursuing the beloved without seeking self-directed purposes: their pursuit of togetherness necessarily involves their attention to the other, which is unrelated to potential profits. Though these writers expressed their yearning for "imagined" communities in their texts, the utopian spaces created in their narratives stand apart from the frozen, hyper-stable, and immobilized social places of Fascism, and other institutional systems. Far from picturing the construction of a homogenized space, the novelists I discuss imagined warm and tender spaces where individuals retrieve the autonomy and personal tastes threatened by autocratic systems in society.

The aesthetic spaces embodied in the writers' texts might appear as a solitary and apolitical setting separate from social realms. It can lead us to suppose that modernists, adherents of "art for art's sake," remained anti-social, solipsistic, and indifferent to sociopolitical issues. Undeniably, the embodied spaces within the realm of narratives tend to present each of these writers as a novelist and aesthete, rather than a social reformer. Even if we accept the notion that Lawrence, Woolf and Spark remained aesthetes, meaning "people who have a special apprehension of beauty" (Brown and

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<sup>12</sup> Arendt's *The Origin of Totalitarianism* describes the rise of anti-Semitism in examining the New Imperialism period from 1884 to the outbreak of World War I.

<sup>13</sup> It is Lawrence who has most frequently received this kind of attack. I will introduce critical responses to Lawrence and totalitarianism in Chapter II.

Gupta 4), however, this argument may not enhance the view that their aesthetic texts take up anti-social and apolitical tendencies. My reading of their works wants to emphasize that the supposedly apolitical scenes in texts have subversive impacts on sociopolitical realities by virtue of engaging highly aesthetic landscapes that are independent of the social systems, and the crowd. Each aesthetic space lapses into anarchy because in it social disciplines imposed by privileged classes or politicians, give way to individual powers. Irrespective of the doctrines of political regimes and social systems, the fictional spaces create a sense of joy, dedicated to one's "atopos," which outwits institutional power and ideological frames. The moments exist as "events in which repressed material returns in ways that disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms, and social order" (Foster xvii). At these moments, we are invited to read the interplay between the invisible spirit and the visible body—a type of body falling outside socially constructed beauty.

One might suppose that Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf were driven by hyperbolic ambitions, ambitions to penetrate into the loved being and to shape the beloved's beauty in material forms of texts. These ambitions might seem nothing less than a sign of their expanded ego, given that they plunged into redemptive aesthetic purposes, daring to shape the figure's amorphous and intangible beauty. However ambitious, these writers could not miss the constraints in which they operated as human artists. Despite the efforts of a willed-ambition, they knew that their works of art would only partly express what they wished to present. Their narratives' momentary achievements show up in what I am calling their embodied scenes that include the moments of beauty, but even

the most “successful” of these moments bears the writer’s awareness of his or her failure as an artist.

Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf stayed eager to find appropriate forms of representation in order to express what they adored even since they realized their incapability of expressing the beloved through verbal signs in texts. They never wanted to engender failure in expressing the beloved, whereas other artists, called postmodernists, resigned themselves from the desire to shape the other in their works. As Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit argue in *Arts of Impoverishment* (1993), postmodern writers such as Samuel Beckett deliberately failed to express the referent because they found such a failure essential to resist an artist’s will-to-mastery over the other. For them, a writer’s failure of expression seemed to abolish “the complacency of a culture that expects art to reinforce its moral and epistemological authority” (Bersani and Dutoit 8). Unlike postmodern artists who regarded “the will to fail” as “the essence of aesthetic endeavor” (Bersani and Dutoit 1), Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf, as ambitious modernists, were desperate to gain success in expressing the ineffable. Desiring aesthetic achievement, they tried to express formless beauty insofar as this was possible. These writers found it difficult to accept the chasm between ambition and ability, but they transformed the bitterness produced by this chasm into an energy for creation, and kept in their texts those moments when they tried to achieve beauty.

## Beauty Suppressed

As Roger Scruton claims in the concluding chapter of *Beauty* (2011), “Beauty is vanishing from our world because we live as though it did not matter (161), we find ourselves in a situation where antagonism against beauty has burgeoned, and the current critical scene proves this climate. As in the case of Marcel Duchamp’s urinal “La Fontaine,” exhibited as a work of art in 1917, many twentieth century artists produced “the never-ending imitations of Duchamp’s gesture” (Scruton 82), trying to reconsider the existing notion of what beauty and art mean.<sup>14</sup> In the context of postwar British society, a wide range of British writers from the Movement poets to the Angry Young Men such as Kingsley Amis and Philip Larkin partook of anti-aesthetic movements. Advocating a return to realism, the literary activists turned away from the discourse on beauty as part of an attempt to register political radicalism in literary works. Since the 1970s, Marxists, Feminists, New Historicists, and Postmodernists have dismissed beauty as the source of sentimental catharsis and closeted aesthetic experience. Here I want to consider three modes of critical approach to beauty, in order to elucidate the unique nature of beauty imagined and depicted by Lawrence, Spack, and Woolf. Thus I hope to claim that the forms of beauty inscribed in their texts have already broken from the types of beauty triggering a set of anxieties among literary and cultural scholars in our time.

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<sup>14</sup> One of Duchamp’s followers is an American artist Andy Warhol, famous for his *Brillo Boxes*, exhibited in New York’s Stable Gallery in 1964.

Feminism and Marxism have argued that beauty is a myth and an ideological strategy of mystification of the status quo. According to this line of criticism, the concept of beauty has fostered the bourgeois and patriarchy's fiction of order, perfection and harmony, which marginalizes those who are excluded from mainstream culture. Much of their research focuses on unmasking particular ways in which society has produced false images of beauty. For example, in *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (1991), Naomi Wolf wrote that "the beauty myth of the present is more insidious than any mystique of femininity yet" (19).<sup>15</sup> Marxist critics such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton associate beauty with an ideologically produced concept, and expose beauty and the aesthetic as a culturally privileged discourse of high art or as a "strategy of mystification of the status quo" (Levine 3). In *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Williams situates the aesthetic and the arts in "the full social material process itself" (155). Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990) looks at the aesthetic as an ideological program originally invented to empower the new social class, the European bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. Significantly, Eagleton points to the link between beauty and manner—a kind of the Western civilization project calling for coercion to hegemony. He argues:

This program [aesthetics] consists in the installation of what the eighteenth century calls "manners," which provides the critical hinge

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<sup>15</sup> For feminist approach to beauty as a myth, see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Penguin, 1986), first published in 1949; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1985), first published in 1970; Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1982).

between ethics and aesthetics, virtue and beauty. Manners means that meticulous disciplining of the body which converts morality to style, aestheticizing virtue and so deconstructing the opposition between the proper and the pleasurable. (1988; 329)<sup>16</sup>

As Eagleton suggests, manners and aestheticization were entwined in the modern western landscape since the eighteenth century, where in a project of visual sophistication, the upper classes in society produced “right” modes of behaviors regarded as “typical or as the hallmark of ‘civilized’ man” (Elias xi). Understood as a cultural good that can be acquired through education, money, and other disciplinary methods, good manners became indicators signifying one’s social rank and educational level.<sup>17</sup> Like feminist scholarship aiming to debunk the ideologies of feminine pulchritude, Eagleton’s argument springs from his intention to decode the hidden “social conditions of the constitution of the mode of appropriation that is considered legitimate” (Bourdieu 1), and to untangle the web of beauty and manners—subservient to cultural programs that index attractive appearances to moral goodness.

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<sup>16</sup> This citation comes from Eagleton’s essay “Ideology of the Aesthetic,” published in *Poetics Today* two years before the publication of *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*.

<sup>17</sup> For the discussion of social mastery through inventing aesthetic manners, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), first published in 1979. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu delineates cultural consumption patterns in France. On this issue Norbert Elias provides a comprehensive study: *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Cambridge: Blackwell P, 1939). For other exemplary studies focusing on manners and civilization, see Nancy Bentley, *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Susan Winnett, *Terrible Sociability: The Text of Manners in Laclos, Goethe, and James* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993).

Such claims for the beauty myth need to be valued for their emphasis on the interestedness of the concept of beauty: as they point out, the notion of beauty is too often entangled with social power and money. Affiliated with privileged social classes, the standards of beauty and its entwined concept, manners, provide strategies of sociopolitical disciplines over individuals. However, despite their groundbreaking critical achievement in debunking political ideologies revolving around the norms of beauty, they have seldom spoken about what beauty then means. These critics are right in identifying the social standards of beauty as mystifying ideologies to be challenged. Yet, preoccupied with deconstructing the link between beauty and manners, they seem to eschew the epistemological questions about what beauty means, and how it can be presented, as if beauty itself were the synonym of good manners or aesthetic perfection. In my view, unless we separate beauty from aesthetic norms, it will result in reducing any pursuit of beauty to an act of submitting to society's coercion. In distinguishing beauty from aesthetic perfection, I hope to modify the assumption of beauty as a mystifying ideology by attending to the textualized beauty, presented as a kind of ineffable radiance given off by the transmutation between body and spirit, to which Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf gave shape to celebrate it.

For the last two decades, many scholars have revitalized a discourse on beauty. Dissatisfied with reductionism and simplification in political arguments against beauty, contemporary scholars reopened the discussion of beauty in the late 1990s, in an effort to rescue the value of aesthetic experiences. In 1993 Dave Hickey wrote *The Invisible Dragon: Essays on Beauty, Revised and Expanded* to recover beauty from the “dead



zone” and the “silent abyss” in criticism (2). Powerful efforts to revitalize beauty went on by Hal Foster, Elaine Scarry, Umberto Eco, Arthur C. Danto, and many others.<sup>18</sup> Their renewed attention to beauty successfully modifies reductive views on beauty by discovering its power to destabilize rigid ideologies and institutional systems of society. In challenge of dogmatic norms of aesthetic tastes, these writers enlarged the scope of beauty and art, raising the fundamental question about what beauty means, and how aesthetic experiences affect human beings. Nonetheless, in studying the early and mid-twentieth century literature, my dissertation proposes that some of the critics’ approaches to beauty, arts, and aesthetic experiences be challenged to fully comprehend the value of beauty, cherished by the writers I consider.

Several critics who reclaim beauty have gone through erasing the distinction between art and life: many of their studies display the tendency of removing the boundary between arts and everyday life, which, in fact, came from their resistance to the ideological production of aesthetic tastes, and moral didacticism that homogenizes the concept of beauty. Providing the notorious case of Duchamp’s urinal, Danto, among

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<sup>18</sup> See Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Massachusetts: MIT P, 1993); Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Illinois: Open Court, 2003). For other works made to reclaim the aesthetic and beauty, for example, see *Aesthetic Subjects*. Eds. Pamela R. Matthews and David McWhirter, *Aesthetics and Ideology*, Ed. George Levine (New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1994), Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetics; Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*. Ed. Michael P. Clark (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000); Virginia Postrel, *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value Is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness* (New York: HarperCollins P, 2003); in this book Postrel seeks to redefine what beauty means. Focusing on the relation between beauty and our sensory experiences, she rejects the conventional link between beauty and goodness: “Beautiful people are not necessarily good, nor are good people necessarily beautiful” (xi); Wendy Steiner, *Venus in Exile: The Rejection of Beauty in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Art* (New York: Free P, 2001), in which Steiner seeks to show how the experience of beauty can expand the freedom of women.

others, includes ordinary objects and daily experiences in the category of aesthetics in defiance of the Kantian concept of aesthetic tastes. Danto subsequently calls for our renewed understanding of “beautification,” referring to artificial beauty, a self-conscious act of “making the worse appear better” by means of cosmetics, fashion, interior decoration,” and others (83).<sup>19</sup> Danto’s emphasis on the artificial making of beauty has an intention to reject moral, puritanical ideologies affiliated with the aesthetic ideal, an accomplice to the domination of the status quo.

In the context of post-World War I and II, however, the act of beautifying things and human beings turned out to be the worst type of creation, because such a making—the aestheticization of politics—served to empower Fascists and the Nazis, who seduced the masses by virtue of beautification, putting political life on “aesthetic” display, thereby, collapsing the distinction between reality and fiction. Indeed, the writers I examine recognized that the artificial beautification became the trap of the political dictators, treating even human beings as raw material for their “work of art,” a project of achieving their political ideal through exploiting the masses. Wary of the current trend of mixing beauty and beautification, my dissertation argues that the writers’ spaces for beauty bear their resistance to the artificial beautification of things and human beings.

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<sup>19</sup> Umberto Eco self-consciously took a more “subversive” gesture when he tried to deconstruct the “binary opposition” between beauty and ugliness. Eco, in *The History of Beauty* (2004), examines the preoccupation with the notion of beauty in Western culture from classical times to the present age in all media. He turned his academic subject from beauty to ugliness, in writing *On Ugliness* (2007), where he traces the construction of the monstrous and the repellant in the arts: both works demonstrate Eco’s notion that beauty and ugliness are culturally produced concepts. For an interdisciplinary discussion of beauty and culturally tabooed subjects, see *Beauty and the Abject*. Eds. Corrado Federici, Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons, and Ernesto Virgulti (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

I also wish to keep my study at a certain distance from a contemporary scholarship that defends the value of beauty, but in some ways subordinates beauty to moral utility. Elaine Scarry is one of the few recent scholars who ardently defend beauty by encouraging us to see something transcendent and sublime in the nature of beauty. Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) proposes that beauty is "sacred" and "unprecedented" (23), and in saying this, she draws on the moment when Homer's Odysseus encounters the sacred and unprecedented beauty in the Greek goddess Nausicaa. Like Homer, Scarry defines beauty as "lifesaving," and argues that the sublime takes place in the emergence of the beautiful, and beauty is generative, sacred and unprecedented. By rendering the quality of the abstract and the spiritual in beauty, Scarry disturbs the longstanding cultural dichotomy between the beautiful and the sublime articulated by eighteenth century thinkers like Kant and Edmund Burke, who "cut off beauty from the metaphysical" (Scarry 85).<sup>20</sup> In seeking to draw a relation between beauty and the idea of social justice, however, Scarry treats beauty as if it were the condition for ethical fairness, thereby subordinating beauty to moral purposes. What Scarry argues is that "the love of beauty increases one's desire for social justice because the presence of beauty helps us keep constant the sense of balance, symmetry, and harmony that looks essential to a sense of justice (102). The important point for Scarry is that it is through our apprehension of the beautiful that we are sensitized to the social

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<sup>20</sup> See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry of the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1756); Kant, *Observations of the Feeling of Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) and also *The Critique of Judgment*. According to Burke and Kant, the beautiful means a refined form, and the aesthetically pleasing, while the sublime indicates the formless and limitless power like nature that goes beyond our understanding, which, therefore, makes us feel overwhelmed and vulnerable.

injustice in the world. As Jennifer Green-Lewis and Margaret Soltan note in *Teaching Beauty in DeLillo, Woolf, and Merrill* (2008), Scarry's discussion "actually centers itself on the belief that beauty not only does something but does something good [for us], so we will look at it more closely" (142).

The practical benefits of beauty are part of the defense of beauty argued in John Lane's *Timeless Beauty: In the Arts and Everyday Life* (2003). While showing his enthusiasm for the timeless value of beauty, Lane's work simultaneously stresses beauty's moral functions. Lane draws from statistics that show that our exposure to aesthetic environments decreases contemporary forms of "Western disease—not so much tuberculosis and cholera as the endemic stress-related illness: smoking, speed-eating, alcoholism, road-rage, drug addiction, suicide, vandalism and angst, which now characterize Western society" (19). Frederick Turner's *Beauty: The Value of Values* (1991) takes beauty as an objective reality in the universe, but this book overemphasizes the correlation between beauty and ethical behaviors in order to address beauty's significance. Turner says that the absence of beauty in the family, in schools, and in public life triggers "the worst of our social problems," while its restoration "will bring real improvements to the lives of all citizens" (15-16).

In such a way, many recent studies of beauty assume that beauty is good because it has practical moral benefits, thereby enabling us to avoid social violence and to improve conditions for our wellbeing. For me, the thinkers' view of beauty as a solution to social problems aligns them with a utilitarian user of beauty, despite their gestures to be a lover of beauty. I do not mean to deny the moral impacts of beauty by themselves,

but desire to point out potential problems underlain in their approach to beauty and morality. Under the terms of this argument, as particularly found in Turner's words, "real improvement to the lives of all citizens" (16), the supposed practical or moral benefits of beauty are in fact in the service of a cultural program in capitalist system: self-improvement, a longstanding bourgeois ideology, constrained by the pursuit of success, security, safety, and happiness, within the realm of social life. Centered in beauty's capability of reorganizing an individual and the whole society, this argument slips in an unwitting accomplice in institutional projects for the transformation of society, a reactionary politics governed by a desire to cultivate the self, and to restructure the shattered fragments into an organic wholeness. Under this argument, an individual seems to be pinned down to an institutionalized sphere in which it is possible to believe that we can be free, happy, and safe, as long as we comprehend the pleasure of beauty. Plus, in emphasizing the benefits of beauty upon *us*, the claim goes toward bestowing a prerogative upon the self, instead of the other. This argument seems to foster a self-reinforcing culture, while curtailing the impacts of beauty. Its preoccupation with the link between beauty and social ethics causes to glance over beauty's radical effects, its subversion to a system of moral categories, invented and imposed by a privileged society.

The textual space of Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf, in contrast, draws us to see the subject of beauty from a new lens apart from the aforementioned scholars' discourse on beauty. The embodied space in their works resists a reduction of a human being or a thing to the status of a member of society, or a mere commodity. By bringing the other's ineffability to the center of the text, their texts try to shatter a perceiver's desire to

dominate the other. The autonomous space turns out to be not a privileged realm of free play of the self, but a realm governed by the desires for love. In the relation with the self and the other, the beloved is presented as an ineffable, original, and unreproducible figure whose beauty has absolute value, rather than exchange value. This representation, no doubt, implies that the forms of beauty depicted in the writers' texts take on radical meanings rejecting the teachings of utilitarianism. Such a beauty should be distinguished from a mystifying ideology intent on reinforcing the status quo within a social system. With its embracing of unproductive desires such as lavish consumptions of emotion, feelings and senses, the aesthetic space bears subversive energies reacting to a set of ideologies specific to totalitarian movements during the post-World War I and II periods. Against the ideas of order, conformity, and totality, it vitalizes the mobilizing forces of creative destruction. For its rarity and unusual desire for the other—not relating to artificial beautification, or aesthetic perfection, their writing offers a shape of “dissensus,” a distinctive sensory presence within a social system.<sup>21</sup> That is to say, the works of Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf make visible the dissensual aesthetic space—produced through searching for the other's originality, “atopos,” at the time when others referred to beauty as an outdated discourse.

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<sup>21</sup> This argument has been much indebted by Jacques Rancière. Rancière uses the term dissensus to mean an autonomous space, body, or presence that stands within society but apart from it while constructing a new sensorium against a set of habitual expectations about sensory experiences. For example, in his 2008 essay “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art,” Rancière identifies an aesthetic space as “a dissensual community.” He explains: “An aesthetic community is not a community of aesthetes. It is a community of sense, or a *sensus communis*. . . . [It] stage[s] a conflict between two regimes of sense, two sensory worlds” (4).

In short, this study takes up the following ideas: (1) that “atopos,” the singular and the original, is the core of beauty in the works of Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf; (2) that each lover’s pursuit of the other’s originality allows him or her to encounter the ineffable feeling of beauty; (3) that the writers in love discussed here desired to frame the other’s beauty in their narratives, but such an ambition cannot be fully accomplished because the text’s material surface and the artist’s ability have limits in expressing something ineffable and limitless; (5) that, nonetheless, their constant efforts yield some rewards: remarkable moments come into being in the texts, if only sporadically, where the beloved’s “atopos” is full-fledged. In this sense, the embodied scenes can be identified as the signs of lovers, revealing their perpetual access to their beloveds. Two points abide in such ideas. Each of these writers’ texts conceives of something original as central to beauty, and this aspect makes their narratives into spaces opposed to the realm of beautification, which means a set of acts for imitating cultural images of beauty in obsession with visual facades. The second point has to do with a reader’s approach to their texts. As I have proposed, these writers’ narratives regard both the visible and the invisible as essential to beauty in challenge of the Western idealization of optical vision, conceived as “the noblest of the senses” since “classical Greece privileged sight over the other senses” (Jay 1993; 29, 22).<sup>22</sup> Their texts in turn give shapeless beauty concrete forms by engaging multiple senses, while calling for our attention to two spatial dimensions, surface and depth, in reading the textual forms of beauty.

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<sup>22</sup> See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

## The Chapters

Focusing on a lover's signs embodied by Lawrence, Spark, Woolf, the following chapters uncover the aesthetic, historical, and cultural significance of their pursuit of the beloved in the context of literary modernism. Who or what were their beloveds? How did they love the other? What were they fighting with for protecting their love?

Answering a series of such questions, each chapter seeks to unravel the threads in the relations among beauty, aesthetic experiences, and obstacles to beauty. As a matrix of aesthetic, epistemological, historical and cultural ideas, the chapters rethink the significance of beauty, which has been long discredited in ideological climates such as Fascism, Nazism, and even literary discourse.

Chapter II traces moments of beauty in Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, his last novel engaging aesthetic scenes that present the moments of beauty. On the one hand, the moments successively express the evolving modes of the amorous subject's approach to the loved being: attraction, adoration, frustration, detachment, acceptance, and waiting. Becoming the footprints of the fictional lovers, the moments simultaneously reveal Lawrence's personal love for Cézanne's paintings of apples, as he articulates the beauty of Cézanne's apples in an essay written in tandem with the novel. In writing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence aspired to provide the text with the uniqueness of Cézanne's apple which seemed strikingly original to Lawrence because the painted apple evokes a tactile feeling in its self-expression of its insideness. Lawrence wanted to register the "palpable" beauty in the surface of the text, but his weakening faith in his ability turned his ambition to bitterness. The novel, however,



includes his remarkable negotiation between the expression of depth and surface, and the radius of his compositional power. By focusing on the moments that illuminate the parallel between the characters' erotics and the writer's aesthetic performance, this chapter rethinks Lawrence as an aesthete in the period of modernism.

Considering the trajectory of beauty, body, spirit, and manners, Chapter III turns to Spark's two interrelated postwar fictions, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *The Girls of Slender Means*, where Spark inscribed moments of beauty comparable to Joycean epiphanies. While literary criticism has rarely connected Spark with the modernists, she enters my discussion as an inheritor of modernism's legacy. Spark's embodied scenes, like Lawrence's, evince that she brought the togetherness of body and spirit to the center of beauty: her aesthetic spaces identify disembodiment or abstraction as a tyranny opposing beauty. As a novelist, Spark wished to express such beauty through her characters, and in *The Girls of Slender Means*, she fulfilled this ambition: Spark gave a beautiful quality to the most unattended of the girls, which seems to be Spark's way of showing love for her character. Thinking about Spark in relation to modernists and to artists who were also fascists, this chapter argues that Spark's embodiment of human beauty has to do with the writer's resistance to Fascism's aestheticization of daily life. In an attempt to show how a fascist-aesthete might confuse art with life, my discussion falls on Spark's most famous novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, which confronts the danger of beautifying persons. Then the chapter turns to *The Girls of Slender Means*, considering the way the novel focuses on a fat girl's beauty that resists the way institutional disciplining works on an individual.

Chapter IV offers a space for Woolf, whose beloved was words themselves. Much influenced by the aesthete art critics like Walter Pater, who proposed gem-like moments as the aesthetic ideal, Woolf adored crystalline moments, and refined writings. But aware of the magical terrain of words—free, spontaneous, mysterious, and powerful enough to go beyond a craftsman’s control, Woolf had to fight with her own desire to seize words. In undertaking the challenge of a craftsman’s obsession with a sort of crystalline writing that constantly demands hyper-management of words, Woolf longed to restore the natural beauty of words in her texts. To restore the original qualities of words might seem overambitious for a novelist, but even in knowing herself doomed to failure, she sought to solve the dilemma. Sometimes Woolf tried to endow words with the sense of smell. In search of Woolf’s idea of words for words’ sake, this chapter focuses on her 1938 short story “The Duchess and the Jeweller,” a meta-fiction that considers opposite terrains—the desire for words themselves and the pressure of shaping them. Paying attention to the embodied scenes designed to reveal the power of words, the last full chapter also explores how words can be coupled with smell in her works.

The twentieth century was a time of pervasive makings of beauty, dominated by such figures as Fascists, the Nazis, consumer capitalists, and a range of artists, all of whom colluded to invent abstract and false images of beauty for the purpose of achieving personal ambitions. In the interwar/postwar culture, where people deemed beauty and love to have disappeared under the World Wars and under political regimes depraving the human dignity, these writers took an “anachronistic” line by seeking after the old values: in search of the deeper truths of their perceptions, the writers I consider

tried to verbalize the ineffable feeling that their beloveds, whether loved beings or entities, arouse in them. Significantly, Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf construed the other's "atopos," the original, and the unreproducible, as the core of beauty in the period when the concept of originality was dethroned by the development of visual mechanical reproduction of art, marked by Walter Benjamin as the loss of aura in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," where Benjamin identifies the aura as the mystical cult of the original.<sup>23</sup> Tracing the writers' ways of shaping the beloveds' unreproducible beauty in the space of texts, the following chapters attempt to unfold each writer's own "atopos" in regards to his or her depiction of beauty.

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<sup>23</sup> The aura for Benjamin represents the originality and authenticity of a work of art that cannot be copied or reproduced through the mechanical reproduction of art. Benjamin argues that the sense of the aura is lost on film and the reproducible image in the wake of the advent of film and photography in the early twentieth century, and the loss of the aura meant a loss of a singular authority within the work of art itself. See Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illumination* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 217-51.

## CHAPTER II

### FASCINATING MOMENTS, EMBARRASSING TOUCH IN *LADY CHATTERLEY'S*

#### *LOVER* BY D. H. LAWRENCE

##### **Reading D. H. Lawrence: An Angry Beauty Seeker**

D. H. Lawrence seems to be a furiously angry writer because he pushes his personal philosophy in seeking to express his own vision within literary texts ranging from lyric poetry, through short stories and novels, to cultural and literary criticism. Having a grand ambition to reform people and society, Lawrence explodes his rage toward political and cultural “illness” such as the First World War, feminist movements, homosexuality and mechanical sex, which signaled for him the malignant influences of a dehumanizing technological culture. As readers of the twenty-first century, we might be perplexed in confronting Lawrence’s anger and his “oracular intrusiveness” (Haegert 5), which seem to derive from the writer’s eagerness to redeem his implied readers from a corrupted culture, and his intention to educate the public. Reacting to Lawrence’s presumptuousness in preaching at readers, a substantial number of critics, in turn, have adopted the rhetoric of anger to denounce him and his writings from his period to the present time.

During his lifetime and following his death on 2 March 1930, Lawrence’s contemporaries found him absurd and idiosyncratic, considering his anger a sign of his lack of decent social decorum and moral sense. T. S. Eliot is one of the readers who diagnosed Lawrence as a “sick” man due to his volcanic eruption of rage: in *After*

*Strange Gods* (1934), Eliot referred to Lawrence as a man of “untrained mind,” asserting that his soul is “destitute of humility and filled with self-righteousness” (59). Ford Madox Ford and David Garnett displayed their upper middle class contempt toward him. In his memoir Ford mentions the class distinction between them in emphasizing Lawrence’s working class background; more disparagingly, Garnett found a working-class sign in Lawrence’s physical appearance, mocking him as “a mongrel terrier” brooding “the most violent class-hatred” of the upper classes (91).<sup>24</sup> Lawrence’s textually-expressed rage is still deemed the root of his aesthetic clumsiness. Paul Delany in this sense notes that “Lawrence often loses control of the fictional tone and yields to pure rage” (375).

The 1950s witnessed the rise of Lawrence’s status as a writer in the hands of F. R. Leavis and other critics like Father William Tiverton, Richard Rees, Mark Spilka, and Chris Baldick, who praised him as a “working-class hero” (Fernihough 2001, 4). F. R. Leavis recognized the importance of Lawrence’s writings in his work, *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (1956).<sup>25</sup> In his influential book *The Great Tradition* (1948), F. R. Leavis placed Lawrence within “the great tradition” of the English novel, which included works by such writers as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad. Lawrence’s upgraded status did not last long, however. Only two decades after F. R.

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<sup>24</sup> Among many detractors in the 1930s, E. M. Forster and Arnold Bennett were Lawrence’s few fellow writers who were sincerely impressed by his artistic talents.

<sup>25</sup> F. R. Leavis is Lawrence’s most sympathetic critic in the twentieth century. Focusing on Lawrence’s “organic wholeness and vitality,” argues he, “the insight, the wisdom, the revived and re-educated feeling for health that Lawrence brings are what, as our civilization goes, we desperately need.” See *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (New York: Knopf, 1956) 17, xiii.

Leavis installed Lawrence as a popular writer, his short heyday ended with a great war with annoyed feminist scholars. The surge of feminist literary studies in the 1970s eroded his once sanctified position because feminist scholars hated his representation of women, which appears to invoke his phallocentric viewpoint. In her groundbreaking work, *Sexual Politics* (1970), Kate Millett—Lawrence’s most famous feminist detractor—collapsed the reverential reception of Lawrence by attacking his male-supremacist attitudes.<sup>26</sup> If the feminist scholars regarded Lawrence as undertaking a misogynistic tract with his awe of phallic power, in a similar vein, others have associated Lawrence’s phallic imagination with his proto-fascist inclination,<sup>27</sup> as Barbara Mensch did in her 1991 book *D. H. Lawrence and the Authoritarian Personality*. Drawing to Bertrand Russell’s famous claim that Lawrence’s blood consciousness “led straight to Auschwitz” (Russell 115), Mensch points to Lawrence’s “childish irrationality” in terms of his “vehement response” to his society, and argues that his authoritarian nature prevented him from producing more mature works (10-11). All these critics have in common presupposing that Lawrence’s texts become a useful vehicle for conveying his personal doctrines.

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<sup>26</sup> For the discussion of Lawrence’s offensive representation of female characters, see Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970); Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982); Hilary Simpson, *D. H. Lawrence and Feminism* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1982); Sheila Macleod and Anne Smith’s collection of essays, *D. H. Lawrence’s Men and Women* (London: Harcourt, 1987); *Lawrence and Women* (Edinburgh: Vision, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> For studies of Lawrence and Fascism, see J. R. Harrison, *The Reactionaries: A Study of the Anti-Democratic Intelligentsia* (London: Gollancz, 1966); Henry Coombes (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Anthology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), David Holbrook, *Where D. H. Lawrence Was Wrong about Women* (London: Associated UP, 1992).

Of all the novels, none has received a more hostile reception than the last one, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which is said to be “tainted” with the author’s mastering voice and his interference in the text. This novel seems to critics to be ideological propaganda because the writer’s authorial voice dominates the narrative by means of discursive statements, revealing Lawrence’s private concerns about the crisis of England brought about by the Great War. The opening of the novel expresses the presence of Lawrence: “Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes” (*LCL*, 1).<sup>28</sup> Though it is unclear what Lawrence meant by “tragic,” we know that it is Lawrence who tells us something here, urging social reformation with a preacher-like manner. As Michael Bell points out in *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (1991), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* generates “a narrative voice” that can be read as “the insertion” into the narrative, comparable to that of Henry Fielding and George Eliot’s (213). Lawrence’s didacticism has determined the critical fate of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. As Joyce Piell Wexler argues in *Who Paid for Modernism?* (1997), Lawrence’s rhetorical style contradicted the aesthetic standard of impersonality and disinterestedness in the 1920s, the period when “modernism has been defined as autonomous and anti-rhetorical” (81).

This was why James Joyce found Lawrence’s last novel particularly repellent to read. Referring to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce

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<sup>28</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Norte P, 2009). Hereafter citations of the text will be marked parenthetically as *LCL*.

wrote that “I read the first 2 pages of the usual sloppy English which is a piece of propaganda in favour of something which, outside of D. H. L’s country at any rate, makes all the propaganda for itself.”<sup>29</sup> Lawrence’s intention to “teach” his readers has made *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* appear “a summation of themes developed through his entire canon” both for the detractors and defenders for this book (Bowen 116-17). Acknowledging the novel’s stylistic weakness but praising its thematic density, Keith Alldritt wrote that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* “demonstrates the singular richness of the early works” (235). Likewise, Marianna Torgovnick considers the last novel far less aesthetic than ideological: she says, it is “a talky novel, one in which virtually every aspect of ideology must be spelled out, again and again, with a too overt didacticism” (152).

From this point on in Lawrence’s critical history, the obstacle to discovering the writer’s “impersonal” love for the other in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, as critics understand it, is his didactic rhetoric. However, it seems reductive to understand the novel as the summation of Lawrence’s personal messages, in that between the writer’s didactic statements there are impersonal, and aesthetic moments detached from his rhetorical intention. The textual sites, engaging the moments of beauty’s revelation, reflect Lawrence’s aspiration to transcend the egoistic-self, in order to perceive things in themselves. Independent of Lawrence’s self-intrusion, the scenes were created from his desire to record the other’s original beauty, “atopos,” increasingly ignored in modern

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<sup>29</sup> *Letters of James Joyce*. Vol. 1. Ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking, 1957) 309. For a defense of the first two pages of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, see Rayner Heppenstall, “A Man in His Senses” in *Times Literary Supplement* (London), 4 November 1960, p.708. R. Heppenstall assesses these pages as “exemplary” and the novel as “an extremely deliberated work.”



society's faith in scientific and technological progress as the path to a better world. The scenes of beauty also betray the inspiration of other writers like Joyce and Flaubert, despite Lawrence's own denial of their influence.<sup>30</sup>

Paradoxically, however, none of the discursive "theory" or "discussion" part in the novel more successfully encapsulates Lawrence's historical, political and epistemological concerns about the postwar English culture than such scenes—the moments that appear the least subject to the writer's authorial voice, but full of poetic descriptions by deploying metaphor, rhythm and repetition. In consideration of his association with a group of aesthetes such as high-modernists or the Bloomsbury, this chapter argues that the moments and spaces of beauty exist as the manifestation of Lawrence's complex reactions to the dominant aesthetic trends in the early twentieth century. By focusing on the aesthetic spaces in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, this chapter tries to demonstrate that the textual sites mark him as a lover driven by the other's "atopos," even though his inclination to penetration produced the plight of him as an artist—who can record the other's qualities only in material surfaces.

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<sup>30</sup> Harold Bloom points out Lawrence's self-conscious rejection of the influence. See *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973). Bloom names Lawrence among a select list of "great deniers of influence" (56). For the studies on the influence of the impersonal modernism on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, see Joyce Piell Wexler, *Who Paid for Modernism: Art, Money and the Fiction of Conrad, Joyce, and Lawrence* (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1997). In a chapter of this book titled "D. H. Lawrence: Impersonality and the Unconscious," Wexler recounts the publishing experiences of Lawrence. According to Wexler, editors introduced Lawrence to Flaubert's impersonality and formal control, "pushing him toward modernism" (74). Lawrence accepted an editor's advice, and his *Lady Chatterley's Lover* shows some signs of such an influence. The affinity between Lawrence and Joyce is well explained in James C. Cowan's "Epiphanies of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*," which will be more discussed later on.

The spaces and moments of beauty in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are significant in many ways. First, the scenes in which beauty is portrayed in part embrace a mode of high modernist aesthetic, which can be compared to Joyce's manifestation of beauty—the epiphany—in spite of Lawrence's intense hatred of him.<sup>31</sup> If Lawrence shared particular modes of high modernist aesthetics, that sharing might unsettle the widespread view that Lawrence is no more than a peripheral figure in a detached and impersonal modernism,<sup>32</sup> and further would challenge countless critics who put an unbalanced emphasis on Lawrence's transgression against society's aesthetic and moral conventions.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Lawrence's fictional and non-fictional writings demonstrate his

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<sup>31</sup> Lawrence remained critical of Joyce. Lawrence read a section of Joyce's *Work in Progress* that later became *Finnegan's Wake*. In a 15 August 1928 letter to Aldous and Maria Huxley, Lawrence expressed his response to Joyce's work: "My God, what a clumsy olla putrida James Joyce is! Nothing but old fags and cabbage-stumps of quotations from the Bible and the rest, stewed in the juice of deliberate, journalistic dirty-mindedness—what old and hard-worked staleness, masquerading as the all-new! (*Letters* IV, 508). See *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. Vol. IV. Eds. George J. Zytaruk and James T Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 508.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Vincent Sherry excludes Lawrence from his range of modernists for the above reason in *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003). In challenge of Sherry's understanding of modernism and Lawrence, two years ago, Carl Krockel rethought what modernism itself means. In *War Trauma and English Modernism: T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), Krockel brings into Lawrence and T. S. Eliot together, attempting to collapse "the boundaries within Modernism, between personality and impersonality, a literature which registers or transcends history, and one constructed from experience or the play of language (8). Michael Bell is one of the most prominent scholars in this field. See Bell, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991); "Lawrence and Modernism" in *The Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence* edited by Anne Fernihough (2011): 179-96.

<sup>33</sup> See Kingsley Widmer, *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1962); his previous essay, "The Primitive Aesthetic: D. H. Lawrence" (*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*: 1959): 115-31. In the series of works, Widmer argues that Lawrence deployed "the extremity of Eros" as his main strategy for transgressing society's conventional values. Paul Poplawski takes a similar standpoint in *Promptings of Desire: Creativity and the Religious Impulse in the Works of D. H. Lawrence* (Westport: Greenwood, 1993). Poplawski assumes that Lawrence's defiant temperament brought him creative energies.

antagonism against the repressive moral, religious and legal prohibition, but nonetheless, such criticism commits the risk of reducing or misrepresenting Lawrence by overemphasizing only one factor, the sensual against the spiritual, or the body against the mind, even though these seeming opposites fall in the “trembling balance” in Lawrence’s last novel.<sup>34</sup> Another reward of looking at the moments of beauty will be that the scenes accommodate delicate fusions of various senses such as sight, sound, smell, and in particular, touch, thereby collapsing the longstanding Western tendency of privileging sight over all other perceptions. In the process of developing his imagination of touch, Lawrence expands the scope of touch, shifts the conventional understanding of the tactile experience, and depicts that the denial of touch weakens our capacity for experiencing the pleasure in beauty. This point lets us recognize the extent to which Lawrence departs from other modernists such as Joyce whose most important epiphanies heavily rest on visual experiences. In addition, it is crucial to note that Lawrence’s embodiment of beauty centers on “vulnerable” things in Nature and “ridiculous” parts of the human body, thus demanding the reader’s increased attention to their particular characteristics that otherwise would be ignored.

To examine the scenes of beauty in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, this chapter sets up explicit and implicit dialogues between this novel and the 1929 essay, “Introduction to

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For more selected works focusing on Lawrence’s romantic nature and transgressive modes of aesthetic, see Eliseo Vivas, *D. H. Lawrence: The Failure and the Triumph of Art* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1960); Eugene Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1963); Michael Ragussis, *The Subterfuge of Art: Language and the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> I borrow the term “trembling balance” from James C. Cowan’s 1990 book, *D. H. Lawrence and The Trembling Balance*.

These Paintings,” a preface to a volume of reproductions of Lawrence’s own paintings, composed when the last novel was waiting to be published.<sup>35</sup> If the 1929 essay centers on Lawrence’s admiration for Cézanne’s painting of apples, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* provides aesthetic scenes, and visionary moments that translate Cézanne’s struggle to visualize the essence of apples into the forms of writing. What follows is divided into three sections. The first section examines the ways in which Lawrence portrays the revelation of beauty, a visionary moment, by focusing on the gamekeeper’s bathing scene that suggests Lawrence’s attraction to abstract, transcendental beauty, which was especially explored in the Western metaphysical philosophy, and the formalist aesthetics. This section also highlights the significant roles of an observer of beauty, which I want to call an “aesthetic subject,” by considering the main character, Connie (or Constance) Chatterley, who partakes of the festival of beauty after encountering a sudden manifestation of beauty. Paying attention to Connie’s judgments of tastes in her perceptions of beauty, this section attempts to show that Lawrence consciously or unconsciously adopted the Kantian ideas of aesthetic judgments.

If beauty is a kind of invisible and transcendent radiance, the medium for experiencing beauty should be visible, material, and physical; according to Lawrence, it

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<sup>35</sup> Lawrence’s last novel has been published in three different versions. *The First Lady Chatterley* is the first version, published by the Dial Press in 1944 and severely found obscene in a magistrate’s court on Staten Island. The second one is *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, first published in English in 1972, and the third version, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, first came out in 1928 in Florence, Italy with assistance from Pino Olioli, and was circulated through private subscription until 1960, the year when the novel was openly published in England for the first time. This process of the making and publishing of *Lady Chatterley* novels is in Derek Britton, *Lady Chatterley: The Making of the Novel* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988). Of the three versions of *Lady Chatterley* novels, I shall concentrate on the most famous version, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.

is a human body that makes a passage to beauty, and the touch of the body quickens the revelation of beauty by stimulating beauty's medium, the body. The second section, therefore, elaborates the dynamic play of touch in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in conversation with Lawrence's essay on Cézanne's paintings, and the discourse on touch proposed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For Lawrence, touch is essential to experience the pleasure in beauty, but it does not mean that every touch can be pleasurable enough to invite the sense of beauty. Lawrence was highly selective in describing a pleasant touch, and for him the touch of "tenderness" constructs the proper medium for beauty.

The third section focuses on the touch between flowers and human bodies, as an example of the touch of tenderness, elucidating the moment when Connie and her lover, named Mellors, wreath flowers about each other's bodies. The discussion of the flower-flesh-contact aims to argue that the scene of the touch between the flesh and the flowers captures Lawrence's rejection of the mechanized carnage of vulnerable things in the post-World War I climate. I also show that the scene lets us peep into Lawrence's artistic desire—which is often covert—for disinterested pleasure, and his self-conscious gesture to stop himself from penetrating into others.

### **Beauty's Revelation and Connie's Judgment of Taste**

Connie Chatterley, the female protagonist of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, increasingly suffers from a feeling of isolation from her wounded husband, Clifford, the heir of an English estate, Wragby, and the owner of the mines at Tevershall village. Paralyzed from the waist down as a result of his war injury, Clifford writes popular fictions that get

him money and fame but are depicted by the narrator as “nothingness.” As Connie’s father observes, “[as] for Clifford’s writing, it’s smart, but there’s *nothing* in it” (14).<sup>36</sup> As a “first-class modern writer” during the post-Great War period, Clifford seems observant and “morbidly sensitive” in depicting things and people around him, but in reality, he is “not in actual touch with anybody,” including Connie (13). In their “vague life of absorption in Clifford and his work,” Connie and Clifford are “utterly out of touch,” (15). The absence of touch and the excess of superficial social meetings at Wragby, where hollow talk of love, marriage and sex abound, make Connie suffer from psychological restlessness that causes her physical thinness (18): the body’s surface embodies her interior condition in this way.<sup>37</sup> Although Connie once attempts to compensate for the sense of loss through her entangled relationship with Michaelis, a young Irish playwright regularly visiting Wragby Hall, she abandons having sex with

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<sup>36</sup> In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence proposes a particular mode of knowing, a somatic or primal consciousness—in opposition to mental consciousness—which is “the spontaneous origin from which it behooves us to live” (13). In developing the notion of a somatically based consciousness, Lawrence subdivides the body in half vertically: the lower half he identifies as the subjective, sensual plane, the upper half as the objective, cognitive plane. According to Lawrence’s basic schema, then, Clifford’s paralysis of the lower half signifies the permanent death of primal consciousness that is concerned with spontaneity, sensuousness, and instinct.

<sup>37</sup> Like a number of writers such as Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy, Lawrence represents the continuity between the psychological condition and the material body. In other words, the body is permeable and porous, and therefore, the surface appearance is capable of embodying the interior essence. For the theme of embodiment in literature, see: William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009). In this book, Cohen analyzes Hardy’s *The Return of the Native*, for example, to show the way in which the body communicates with the landscape. Cohen says, the “perceptually permeable bodies are contiguous with the natural world, that landscape is in turn a percipient body, and that the two bodies exist in a mutually constitutive relation” (89). In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence presents the influence of the landscape on human bodies by describing the changed appearance of Connie’s body and the mineworkers’ bodies in accordance to the place where they are. In this way, a sharp distinction between the human subject and the external world is blurred in Lawrence’s fiction as well as Hardy’s.

him after finding the repressed bitterness in his mind. In her growing realization of the sterility at Wragby Hall, one day Connie is introduced to Oliver Mellors, her husband's gamekeeper, while walking beside Clifford along the wood. Connie, wary of empty talk and gossip, which are conditions of life at Wragby, becomes magnetically drawn to Mellors's silence and to his "perfect, fearless, impersonal look" (48), and their first encounter moves them toward successive sexual affairs, which will take place at Mellors's cottage in the wood. The space of the wood stands for Mellors's naturalness, supposedly unspoiled by the modern industrial world.

Numerous critics have contended that Connie's psychological and physical development begins at this moment. From the first meeting to their sexual consummation rendered in chapter 12, in which Connie is said to have been "born a woman" (200), the successive sexual encounters produce Connie's change. It has been claimed that Connie's physical contacts with Mellors allow her to do away with her old self (the self of a modern woman), to escape from the castle of repression, and in the end to achieve the resurrection of the body, which in turn leads her to a new awareness of the self and sexuality. For example, in *D. H. Lawrence and the Phallic Imagination* (1989), Peter Balbert claims that Connie "confidently defines the rare qualities of a phallic imagination in Mellors," and the female character's "primitive unconscious helps *her* take all but the very final initiative with him" (169, 173). In Balbert's view, Lawrence's novel evidently represents Connie as a learner experiencing "egoless sexual excitements" with the male lover who "is primarily responsible for Connie's gradual

embrace of instinctual knowledge over the security of willful, mentalized conditioning” (174, 176).

This familiar claim grounds the hypothesis that Connie’s sexual and spiritual rebirth comes from the assistance of the “superior” gamekeeper, whose positive qualities correspond to the intrinsic merits of the so-called “sacred” woods, emblematic of spontaneity, fertility, and vitality against the mechanistic lifestyle of Wragby that symbolizes the modern technological society. This understanding has become a shared presupposition in approaching the antithetical fictional spaces and figures in Lawrence’s last novel. For example, Michael Squires argues, “Wragby comes to symbolize mechanical energy, industrialism, intellectual sterility, egotism, will” while “the wood comes to symbolize natural energy, exceptional and sexual fertility, nature, silence, spontaneity, tenderness” (26).<sup>38</sup>

Undeniably, Connie’s connection with Mellors accelerates her bodily awakening, but it seems an exaggeration to say that the influence of Mellors becomes the single source putting forward the entire narrative and engendering Connie’s mental and physical revival. Critics, in focusing on this woman as one of the pupils receiving Mellors’s lesson, tend to neglect Connie as a character in her own right. Yet, Connie

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<sup>38</sup> Lawrence himself was preoccupied with the didactic categorization. He had two opposite worlds in his mind: the natural and primitive world untouched by the modern technology, and the world polluted by the modern civilization. Lawrence’s posthumously published essay “A Study of Thomas Hardy” (1936) asserts that Hardy’s characters fall into two opposed groups in Lawrence’s reading. This essay is in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence*, Ed. Edward D. Macdonald (New York, Viking P, 1936) 482-88. But Perry Meisel points out Lawrence’s narrow understanding of Hardy. In his 1987 book Meisel argues that Lawrence’s habitual dichotomization between nature and culture led him to fall into the epistemological trap. See *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987) 17-22.



deserves closer scrutiny in that her reflections and actions help us view her as an active aesthetic participant—a term by which I mean an independent beauty seeker who adores a “beautiful” spectacle, who expresses a judgment of beauty that is “not merely a statement of preference” but that “demands an act of attention” (Scruton 13), and who is qualified by this to experience a new mode of beauty that gives rise to powerful effects on her.<sup>39</sup> In a sense, the process Connie undergoes seems tantamount to that of aesthetic protagonists elsewhere such as Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus, Woolf’s Lily Briscoe, or Joseph Conrad’s protagonists who experience the moment of revelation: the moment of profound insight showing forth the manifestation of beauty. Connie confronts the moment of epiphany, a word Joyce’s Stephen employs to express “sudden illuminations produced by apparently trivial, even seemingly arbitrary cases,” or “the kind of moment of insight” that “[plays] an important and new role in modern literature” from the works of Conrad and Woolf to those of Proust (Beja 13). Like other characters in modernist fictions, Connie encounters the moment of revelation, adores the impressions of the object, and in turn questions what lies behind its fascinating appearance.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Roger Scruton provides a thought for the issue of judgments of taste in *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011). What Scruton emphasizes is that the judgment of taste is about both the beautiful object and the subject’s state of mind. He says, “these judgments focus on the state of mind of the subject, rather than a quality in the object”(6). This account of aesthetic judgments adds one point to the notion of Kant who understands beauty as a quality in the object itself. Connie’s judgments also involve these two dimensions.

<sup>40</sup> The matter of “behind the appearance” consists in one of the major subjects in modernist fictions. Virginia Woolf is a typical modernist in search of the essence of things behind appearance. She argues that behind the cotton wool is there a hidden pattern in “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf’s autobiographical essay collected in *Moments of Being* (New York: Harcourt, 1985).

To examine Connie's experience of finding beauty, I will turn to a pictorial scene in chapter 6, where Connie goes into the wood and by accident finds the gamekeeper washing himself outside of his cottage. The following passage depicts Mellors's body that charms Connie, who came to the cottage for the purpose of getting him Clifford's business message in the unexpected absence of an ill servant:

She turned the corner of the house and stopped. In the little yard two paces beyond her, the man was washing himself, utterly unaware. He was naked to the hips, his velveteen breeches slipping down over his slender loins. And his white slim back was curved over a big bowl of soapy water, in which he ducked his head, shaking his head with a queer, quick little motion, lifting his slender white arms, and pressing the soapy water from his ears, quick, subtle as a weasel playing with water, and utterly alone. Connie backed away round the corner of the house, and hurried away to the wood. In spite of herself, she had had a shock. After all, merely a man washing himself, commonplace enough, Heaven knows!

Yet in some curious way it was a visionary experience: it had hit her in the middle of the body. She saw the clumsy breeches slipping down over the pure, delicate, white loins, the bones showing a little, and the sense of aloneness, of a creature purely alone, overwhelmed her. Perfect, white, solitary nudity of a creature that lives alone, and inwardly alone. And beyond that, a certain beauty of a pure creature. Not the stuff

of beauty, not even the body of beauty, but a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life, revealing itself in contours that one might touch: a body! (72)

The imagery of Mellors's body is elaborated in detail from Connie's perspective, while making the content of the first epiphany in this novel: at this specific time and place, Connie attains an opportunity to encounter the sudden manifestation of beauty in the observation of Mellors's naked body, and the appearance of his body impresses upon the perceiver's consciousness to the extent that it "touches" her body. What, then, is the value and importance of this visionary moment to navigate Lawrence's exploration of beauty in the context of modernism?

Before proceeding to examine Connie's reaction to the epiphany and the subsequent impacts the bathing scene entails, it is necessary to clarify the nature of the beauty that Connie discovers in recognizing the body of Mellors because this investigation will show us the point at which Connie is similar to other artistic protagonists elsewhere, and at which Lawrence is similar to his modernist contemporaries. The beauty Connie encounters is fundamentally transcendent, invisible and mystical; the last sentence of the citation affirms that beauty is "not the stuff of beauty, not even the body of beauty, but a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life, revealing itself in contours that one might touch" (72). This point contradicts a widespread critical perception that Lawrence always privileged the sensual and the physical over the spiritual and the metaphysical in developing his notion of beauty. Clearly, Lawrence cherishes the sensuousness of physical bodies, unfairly neglected in

the hyper mental-based culture, and he explores the ways in which an artist recuperates the intuitive imagination, a significant faculty for experiencing the beautiful, against the preoccupation with cerebral understanding, as he argues in his non-fictional writings.<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding, we can discover in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* Lawrence's fascination with the sudden revelation of transcendent beauty, analogous with the epiphanies his modernist contemporaries eagerly embraced. In this novel, Lawrence creates scenes where metaphysical and non-metaphysical elements coexist, and by which the aesthetic protagonist—Connie—is led to encounter a new sense of beauty that she has never experienced in her society.

In fact, the bathing scene in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* reflects Lawrence's fascination with abstract, and transcendental moments of beauty, resonating with Joyce's epiphanies in some ways. In shaping the moment of beauty, Lawrence makes spiritual and physical elements coexist in the bathing scene, presenting the flux between the abstract and the material. The beauty Connie perceives appears fundamentally abstract, and ineffable kind of beauty, as found in Lawrence's words, "not even the body of beauty" (72). But the shapeless beauty is lingering around the man's body, a tangible and accessible site. The supposedly antithetical qualities meet together at the moment of beauty in this way, and such a relation between the spiritual and the material makes unique the visionary moment of beauty.

Lawrence's attraction to transcendental beauty aligns him with high modernists he despised for they seemed to make material bodies abstract and vague. The writer's use

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<sup>41</sup> This point centers on his essays, "Art and Morality," "Morality and the Novel," "Why the Novel Matters," and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

of color images, attached to Mellors, discloses his covert fascination with visions of disinterestedness, impersonality, and religious images, even if he posed himself as an anti-idealist adhering to the metaphysical and impersonal mode of beauty. If we pay attention to the specific imagery used to depict the body of Mellors—"a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life" (72)—, it can be possible to see that the color white and the light-imagery, which Western philosophy has associated with abstract idealism, predominate. Lawrence provides Mellors with whiteness and transparency: "his white slim back," "his slender white arms," and "perfect, white, solitary nudity" (72). For those who emphasize Lawrence's anti-platonic and anti-Christian stance, it would be more or less striking that the white color and the transparent image have positive connotations in his novel because such critics believe in Lawrence's hatred of whiteness and transparency.<sup>42</sup> The bathing of Mellors, however, proves that the critics'

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<sup>42</sup> In *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetic and Ideology* (1993), for example, Anne Fernihough stresses Lawrence's distaste for the pale colors and the image of light in developing her analysis of Lawrence as an anti-idealist. She argues that in Lawrence's works "the crystal is always a negative image, precisely because its transparency suggests a Kantian (or Platonic) denigration of the material world" (97). Fernihough's premise is that the image of transparency and whiteness, engaged in a great deal of modernist writing, derives from the obsession with the spiritual and transcendental mode of being, a kind of "inaccessible ontological plan," which appealed to modernist writers whose impulse moves towards "the unity underlying diversity" (97). To exemplify Lawrence's antagonism to the pale color, Fernihough turns to Lawrence's depiction of Gerald Grich in *Women in Love* (1920), a self-disciplined industrial man who goes against Lawrence's notion of spontaneous life. Gerald is characterized as a white man having "fair hair" glistening "like cold sunshine refracted through crystals of ice" (*Women in Love*, 14), and the crystal hue on his appearance is noted by Fernihough to support Lawrence's objection to abstract colors. Jack Stewart, in *The Vital Art of D. H. Lawrence: Vision and Expression* (1999), cites the same phrase from *Women in Love* to show that Lawrence employs the image of crystal and pale colors in a pejorative sense. Stewart suggests, "[the] image of 'cold sunshine' signifies the unnatural will that chills blood-consciousness; it is an aspect of the Nordic motif that links Gerald's vital aura at the start, a 'glisten like cold sunshine refracted through crystals of ice,' with his ultimate materialization into block of ice" (Stewart 75). Like Fernihough, Stewart presupposes Lawrence's objection to pale colors, and thus claims that, as an Expressionist defending an art of excess, Lawrence naturally favored vivid color over the subtle images of

observations scarcely fit in with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. I hope to point out that, in the study of color imagery and Lawrence's vision for art, Lawrence's last novel tends to be omitted by critics for unknown reasons.<sup>43</sup> The omission seems more than a minor problem because it tends to disallow us to recognize that *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence's most didactic fiction, betrays the writer's desire, if often covert or unstated, toward the impersonal, spiritual and ideal beauty, no matter how unrealistic and unattainable it might be outside the realm of literature. For Lawrence, the segregation of artworks from real life was what he had to fight off, as he condemns the attitude that fosters such segregation over and over in his essays, but instead his last novel accommodates the transcendental beauty, implying that the fiction itself cannot be the medium for sermons, debates or propagandas. The transparency linked to Mellors's body in fact echoes Joyce's inscription of epiphany in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where the "bathing girl" captivates the observer. From the girl, the viewer is attracted to "a faint flame trembled on her cheek," just as Connie adores "the warm white flame of a single life" from the contours of Mellors's body. As James C. Cowan

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light, steam, fog, and mist because lavish color appears far more adequate for embodying the inner vitality, instinct, and hyper sensuousness, all of which are concerned with the intense feelings.

<sup>43</sup> The first comprehensive study in this field is Keith Alldritt's *The Visual Imagination of D. H. Lawrence* (Evanston III: Northwestern UP, 1971). For other studies exploring Lawrence's artistic vision in connection his novels, see Jeffrey Meyers, *Painting and the Novel* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1975), in which Meyers examines *The White Peacock*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love*. In her influential monograph, *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), Marianna Torgovnick situates Lawrence in a group of modernists whose writings are interrelated with the vision of visual arts. For the study of link between Lawrence's visual imagination and his prewar novels, see Nancy Kushigian, *Pictures and Fictions: Visual Modernism and the Pre-War Novels of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

notes in “Lawrence, Joyce, and the Epiphanies of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (1985), the aura of divinity enters the aesthetic scenes where both observers, Stephen and Connie, encounter the revelation of beauty in virtue of the color white.

In the bathing scene, Mellors’s body emerges as if it were an organic and self-sustaining work of art, although Lawrence’s own art criticism rejects the idea of formal perfection in creating artworks and claims that it escapes the ideology of aesthetic completeness. The presence of Mellors’s body addresses the “religious-aesthetic withdrawal [of symbolist modernism] from existential time into the eternal simultaneity of essential art” (Spanos 158). More than once his “aloneness” and “single life” are transmitted to Connie as the dominant image in the visual spectacle: the feeling Connie receives here can be analogous with what an observer of beauty may receive from a work of art. Mellors’s “aloneness” echoes the state of a self-sufficient work of art, namely, a perfect, static, and refined artwork, which came into being the ideal model for modernists. The bathing scene accompanies a mode of disinterestedness in a way that portrays Mellors’s body as “the active, free space of disinterested being” or “the disinterested space of aesthetic free play” (Pease 138-39). Despite Lawrence’s self-conscious objection to the concept of impersonal and formalist artworks, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* leaves spaces for transcendent beauty, as shown in the bathing scene, in which the formless beauty is revealed by virtue of the material form as if Mellors were an art object mediating between beauty and the perceiver.

The text inscribes Connie as an aesthetic participant who comes to aspire to radical shifts in attitudes toward the new sense of pleasure in beauty since encountering

the visionary moment revealed by means of Mellors's body. Connie emerges as the active aesthetic participant responding to the beauty she newly found: her role as a participant in beauty involves the initial observation, adoration, reflective judgments, redefinition of beauty, and reception of the new aesthetic codes. Constrained by the culturally imposed aesthetic taste in art, Connie has known a narrower scope of aesthetic pleasure in the circle of the middle and upper class intellectuals than she thinks, but the experience of seeing Mellors's bathing encourages her to accept a new mode of the aesthetic that has yet been ventured in her life. Indeed, Connie's experience of encountering the visual scene brings about a crisis by urging her to go beyond her epistemological boundary.

When Connie encounters Mellors's bathing in the wood, she feels captivated by the scene, which signifies the adoration process, and this moment accentuates Connie's pain by sharpening her dissatisfaction with her present condition. The experience of observing the beauty from the bathing scene unmask what is amiss in her relationship with Clifford: the lack of warm touch. While Stephen's "bathing-girl" epiphany remains an ecstatic moment (this chapter ends with Stephen's elation), Connie's experience of confronting the moment engenders her self-reflection on her body: taking off all her clothes in her bedroom and in reflecting on her body on the mirror, she feels that her body "lacks something" because it is "flattening and going a little harsh," and goes "a little greyish and sapless," instead of "ripening its firm, down-running curves," as if "it had not had enough sun and warmth" (76). Looking in "the other mirror's reflection at her back, her waist, her loins," Connie finds her body getting thinner, which gives rise to



“the sense of deep physical injustice”: she inwardly cries “Unjust, Unjust!” while sobbing bitterly in her bed (77). Once the feeling of physical injustice is aroused, says the narrator, it is dangerous because “it must have outlet” to not “eat away the one in whom it is aroused” (78). Connie's physical sense of injustice deepens her feeling of rebellion against Clifford, whose “lack of the simple, warm, physical contact” has flattened her female roundness, which is a flattening physical embodiment of interior enervation. Since encountering the moment of revelation in Mellors's bathing, Connie goes into internal struggles by realizing the injustice of the absent touch in her relation with Clifford: she is summoned toward a meaningful awakening. Similarly, the bathing-girl epiphany in Joyce's novel spurs the protagonist to receive a divine call as an artist, the alternative for becoming a priest of Catholic Church.

However, it is important to note that Mellors's bathing spectacle involves the issue of aesthetic judgment ensuing from the initial feeling of adoration. The bathing scene does not simply remain the moment of ecstasy but motivates the perceiver to critically respond to her own aesthetic taste, raising the question of why she is attracted to the particular scene: not surprisingly, this question would be highly provocative if the adored object seems to depart from the cultural norms of beauty. In this context, the visual spectacle of Mellors's bathing fascinates Connie, making this the site of her struggles to achieve her autonomous notion of beauty; the bathing scene destabilizes the existing frame of her epistemological concepts of art, aesthetic and beauty. Connie's observation of the bathing scene is not as “pure” as Stephen's “bathing girl” epiphany because while Joyce's bathing scene centers on Stephen's self-elation, concerned with

the feeling of sublimation, Connie's adoration of the spectacle is shortly followed by self-doubt that engenders a split consciousness for her.

Enamored by the beauty of the scene of the man's bathing, Connie is perplexed by her own fascination with the spectacle. The narrator describes Connie's ambivalent feelings toward her adoration: "But with her mind she was inclined to ridicule. A man washing himself in a back yard! No doubt with evil-smelling yellow soap! She was rather annoyed; why should she be made to stumble on the vulgar privacies?" (72). As expressed in this passage, the bathing scene in fact leads her to both adoration and disgust with her own taste. It is obvious that Connie finds it difficult to resist the powerful fascination with the bathing-spectacle on the one hand, but she can scarcely acknowledge the beauty she newly discovered through the man's body, on the other hand, because this beauty seems at a glance different from what she has known so far. Far from growing up as a cultural philistine, Connie has been educated to pursue entertainment in the arts. As shown early in the novel, Connie's mother is a Fabian socialist, and her father is a painter: "between artists and cultured socialists, Constance and her sister Hilda had had what might be called an aesthetically unconventional upbringing" (2). Intending to cultivate the sisters' tastes for arts, their parents had been to Paris, Florence, and Rome with them, and as a consequence of this "aesthetically unconventional upbringing," indicative of Connie's absorption in the Bohemian climate and cosmopolitan styles, Connie has internalized decadent styles in art and life as her aesthetic tastes.

Connie's self-cultivation as an observer of beauty is continued after marrying Clifford, as Lawrence refers to the paintings of Renoir and Cézanne on the wall of her private room, a place relatively isolated from the touch of others, so as to remain "the only gay, modern one in the house, the only spot in Wragby where her personality [is] at all revealed" (23). Wanting to preserve her own taste and personality from the influence of Clifford, Connie lets only very few people into the room, and of course, Clifford has never obtained a chance to take a look at it, though Michaelis has been invited to the room, where he tells her "it's [the painting] very pleasant up here," "You are wise to get up to the top" with "his queer smile" (23). Lawrence keeps silent about the deeper meaning of Connie's taste for Renoir and Cézanne, while rendering a brief commentary on Renoir's art by means of Tommy Dukes' voice: he says in a chapter to come, "Renoir said he painted his pictures with his penis. . . he did too, lovely picture! I wish I did something with mine" (40). Dukes' response to Renoir's work of art, which is said to be painted with his penis, hints at Connie's potential to experience the pleasure in the body later on, but at this stage her understanding of such a painting remains an epistemological enjoyment. As Connie replies to Michaelis, "Yes, I think so" (23), when she is praised for her decoration of the room with the paintings of Renoir and Cézanne, she seems content with her aesthetic taste, but after being enchanted by the beauty in the bathing scene, she despairs about her fascination with the spectacle. The sense of rebellion rises in her mind since the visual spectacle that has charmed her little appeals to her epistemological conception of beauty, which is the product of cultural education; rather it appears only trivial, commonplace and vulgar.

At first, Connie dislikes that she adores Mellors's bathing—full of “unfashionable” elements such as the lower class man's naked body and the cheap smell of the yellow soap. The thing that attracts Connie here departs from what she has usually considered beautiful, so that she begins to ask herself why she should “be made to stumble on the vulgar privacies” (72). Connie wants to resist her fascination with the bathing scene: “After all, merely a man washing himself; commonplace enough, Heaven knows!” (71). This kind of embarrassment, however, characterizes an aesthetic subject in modernist fictions, in that the tension between certainty and doubt is central to establishing modern subjectivity; we see this dialectic pattern in modernist writings, where artist figures oscillate between insight and resistance—the ontological condition of uncertain subjectivity—until reaching the moment of releasing themselves from this tension. Like other major figures Connie lacks the fullness of self-trust, but such ambivalence toward her desire inheres in modern subjectivity in this novel. In a sense Connie feels ashamed by her fascination with the trivial incident, but the ostensibly insignificant spectacle in fact makes a defining characteristic of epiphanies in modernist fictions, including *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

This seemingly trivial incident in Mellors's bathing scene has the consequence of making Connie reexamine and extend her conception of beauty. The chapter following the bathing epiphany includes Connie's conversation with Clifford in which Connie seeks to justify her subjective impressions obtained by watching the bathing scene:

“The game-keeper, Mellors, is a curious kind of person,” she said to Clifford; “he might almost be a gentleman.”

“Might he?” said Clifford. “I hadn’t noticed.”

“But isn’t there something special about him?” Connie insisted.

“I think he’s quite a nice fellow, but I know very little about him. He only came out of the army last year, less than a year ago. . . .” Connie gazed at Clifford contemplatively. She saw in him the peculiar tight rebuff against anyone of the lower classes who might be really climbing up, which she knew was characteristic of his breed.

“But don’t you think there is something special about him?” she asked.

“Frankly, no! Nothing I had noticed.” (74-75)

On the surface the above dialogue serves to rebuke Clifford whose class-consciousness prevents him from intuiting other people, despite his self-conceit of cerebral sensitivity. In a sense, Clifford’s reaction to Connie’s questions reveals his lack of intuition, but the above quotation suggests more than this. This conversation implies Connie’s desire to share her subjective feeling with others, which can be identified with an artist’s intrinsic desire for addressing his or her vision through works of art to the audience. Connie’s questioning is a way of justifying her subjective impressions, and such an inquiry corresponds to one’s effort to make other people agree with his or her aesthetic taste: it is a desire to share her subjective impression with others. Connie falls into an irresistible adoration in the bathing scene, but the judgment of taste follows it, which shows her attempt to make her own vision more communicable and acceptable. This pattern structures Connie’s experience of beauty that begins with her perception of Mellors’s bathing. Connie’s intuition makes her perceive a certain kind of beauty in the scene, but

after observing the spectacle, she judges her enchantment by embracing the psychic tension her self-doubt entails. Beyond Clifford's denial she comprehends the depth of what she saw from Mellors's body, while acknowledging the self-division afflicting her mind. Later on in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, however, we shall see a more self-assured and less doubtful Connie, who fearlessly expresses her feeling for Mellors without self-suspicion, declaring what she thinks of the genuine sense of beauty. Connie tells her sister, "[y]ou see, Hilda," . . . "you have never known either real tenderness or real sensuality: and if you do know them, with the same person, it makes a great difference (306). This kind of self-assurance only comes after the oscillation between her adoration and her objection to the way her own taste deviates from the cultural standard of beauty.

### **Touching and Being Touched: A Passage to Beauty**

The aesthetic scenes in this novel engage spiritual revelations of beauty, compared to epiphanies, but at the same time, the sites are filled with physical modes of beauty, felt by touch. In reaction to the modern optical-oriented paradigm—privileging sight over the other senses, Lawrence paid attention to the play of touch, for him, the primary sensory channel for reaching beauty. As we can see in the essay "Introduction to These Paintings" (1929), Lawrence links the predicament of English artists with their fear of touch, namely a pathological horror of the body digging in "to the English soul at the time of the Renaissance" (*Phoenix*, 551). Finding the roots of this fear from Plato's idealism to the Puritan association of the body with illness—alleged as a psychic consequence of the awareness of syphilis and pox, Lawrence argues that the denigration

of physical touch harms the vital imagination and sensual qualities of English artworks. For Lawrence, the Anglo-Saxon fear of the body has distorted the English vision of art and life, depriving the English of the whole imagination, including physical, intuitional perception. Because their preoccupation with mental consciousness has cut off their intuitional awareness, in Lawrence's view, modern English and Americans can see "the living body of imagery as little as a blind man can see color," although they "stare so hard" and so "*want* to see" the essence of beauty pertaining to artworks such as the Botticelli Venus: says Lawrence, "their eyesight is perfect," but "all they can see is a sort of nude woman on a sort of shell on a sort of pretty greenish water. As a rule they rather dislike the 'unnaturalness' or 'affectation' of it. If they are high-brows they may get a little self-conscious thrill of aesthetic excitement. But real imaginative awareness, which is so largely physical, is denied them" (*Phoenix*, 557).

In the 1929 essay Lawrence traces the English fear of physicality back to the Renaissance, but his critique falls on a more specified group of his contemporaries: the British modernists and art critics in the Bloomsbury society. Lawrence's discussion develops into a critique of such Bloomsbury critics as Roger Fry and Clive Bell, who propagated formalist aesthetics in the early twentieth century. For example, as an enthusiastic defender of abstract art, Bell unfolds the concept of significant form in *Art* (1914)—one of the key texts of Bloomsbury art-criticism, in which he employs the term "significant form" to define significant relationships between lines, shapes, colors, and other sensory properties. Arguing that the value of art lies in its capability of inventing a distinctive aesthetic experience in the viewer, Bell calls this experience "aesthetic

emotion,” the feeling aroused by significant form. Bell also suggests that the reason we experience aesthetic emotion in response to the significant form of artworks is that we perceive that form as an expression of an experience the artist has. The artist’s experience in turn is the experience of seeing ordinary objects as pure form: the experience one has when one sees something not as a means to something else, but as an end in itself (Bell 45). Bell deems that the value of anything whatever lies only in its being a means to “good states of mind” (Bell 83). According to Bell, “there is no state of mind more excellent or more intense than the state of aesthetic contemplation” (83). In “Introduction to These Paintings,” Lawrence attacks Bell’s art criticism because he thinks that Bell’s theory of pure form is guilty of abstracting the bodily characteristic of objects. Tackling the Bloomsbury artists’ delight in abstract arts, Lawrence parodies Bell’s passage on significant form: “Purify yourselves, and know the one supreme way, the way of Significant Form. I am the revelation and the way! I am Significant Form, and my unutterable name is Reality. Lo, I am Form and I am Pure, behold, I am Pure Form. I am the revelation of Spiritual Life, moving behind the veil” (*Phoenix*, 565-66).<sup>44</sup> Imitating Bell’s evangelical tone, which sounds to Lawrence like “a form of masturbation, an attempt to make the body react to some cerebral formula” (*Phoenix*, 567), Lawrence claims that the predilection for abstract forms grinds upon the mental-visual perception making the true nature of things disappear.

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<sup>44</sup> Lawrence parodies the third chapter of *Art*, “The Metaphysical Hypothesis,” where Clive Bell asserts that artistic vision lets us see “that which lies behind the appearance of all things—that which gives to all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality” (Bell 69-70). See Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes C., 1914).



Some characters in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* echo Lawrence's enemies in the Bloomsbury group. Among the Bloomsbury members, Duncan Grant, a young English painter, raised Lawrence's anger at Grant's dematerialization of substantial bodies. Grant's effacement of bodies on canvases appeared to Lawrence to evince the fear of body. Thus, in the letter of January 1915 Lawrence suggests Lady Ottoline Morell advise Grant that "one cannot build a complete abstraction, or absolute, out of a number of small abstractions, or absolutes. . . . One can only build a great abstraction out of concrete units" (*Letters* II, 263).<sup>45</sup> In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Grant becomes the model of Duncan Forbes, an artist friend of Connie and Hilda, whose abstract works of art instigate Mellors's contempt. The narrator says that Duncan's "art was all tubes and valves and spirals and strange colours, ultra-modern, yet with a certain power, even a certain purity of form and tone: only Mellors thought it cruel and repellent. He did not venture to say so, for Duncan was almost insane on the point of his art: it was a personal cult, a personal religion with him" (*LCL*, 347). Lawrence's antagonism toward abstract forms reverberates in his 1929 essay: "They still hate the body—hate it. But, in a rage, they admit its existence, and paint it as huge lumps, tubes, cubes, planes, volumes, spheres, cones, cylinders, all the 'pure' or mathematical forms of substance" (*Phoenix*,

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<sup>45</sup> See *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*. Vol. II. Eds. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997). Grant is a Bloomsbury painter whose painting style was developed in the wake of French Post Impressionist exhibitions mounted in London in 1910. To examine the detailed illustration of Grant's paintings, see Richard Shone and Richard Morphet, *The Art of Bloomsbury: Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999). The authors call Grant's *Venus and Adonis* (1919), which raised Lawrence's despise, a painting of "a voluptuous and watchful goddess, languishing for her lover who appears as a tiny, naked figure, errant in the distant landscape" (13). For Lawrence, Grant's painting exemplifies the abstract body that appears as a mere stuff.

564-65). Lawrence conceives that the significance of “significant form” lies in the eye of the beholder, and similarly, the geometric forms on abstract paintings signify disembodied bodies, a visual manifestation of the artists’ fear of bodily existence.

As an opponent of modern art’s abstract forms, Lawrence strove to bind together visual and tactile experiences because the combination of vision and touch makes the beauty more perceptible to an observer.<sup>46</sup> In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Mellors’s bathing scene is a visual spectacle, but it simultaneously produces a tactile feeling by “hitting” Connie “in the middle of [her] body” (71). The experience of seeing Mellors at once “touches” the inside of her body, and therefore, collapses the solid boundary between sight and touch. Critics tend to separate visual perception from the experience of touch, but *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* invites a translation between touching and seeing, as Lawrence casts Mellors’s “far-seeing” eyes as the medium of affecting Connie’s body (71). In a similar sense, Lawrence implies the penetrating-touching quality of seeing by mentioning the eyes of Connie’s father, who is capable of intuiting the “inner” change of Connie’s body when she has her first sexual affair with a boy as a teenager.

The concept of seeing as touching, and touching as penetrating is elaborated at length by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose phenomenological tools shed light on Lawrence in some ways. Focusing on the reciprocal exchange of senses, Merleau-Ponty

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<sup>46</sup> In *The Resurrection of the Body: Touch in D. H. Lawrence* (1993) Kathryn A. Walterscheid sketches out the continuum of touch to examine how Lawrence textualized the experiences of touch. Touch on the skin—the outside surface of the body—becomes the most familiar type of physical contact, which arouses direct tactile stimuli such as the touch between mother and children, or kissing between lovers (1), the spectrum of touch in fact includes sight and hearing as well as the epidermal touch. Lawrence’s fictions present the crossing over of the various senses.

contends that seeing and touching share a human body—"the flesh" or "the chasm"—as the common space or medium that allows them to "cross over" into each other and exchange information. The frequently mentioned example of touching-touched hands makes it clear that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology de-centers the subject-object relationship: "when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the 'touching subject' passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things'" (1968; 133-34). Through the case of touching and touched hands, Merleau-Ponty accounts for a "reversibility" of the subject and the object where the dichotomy between touching and being touched is unsettled. Offering this model of touch, Merleau-Ponty turns his attention to a spatial imagery, "depth," which remains dark and obscure to our eyesight, to discuss the reversibility of two sense perceptions, seeing and touching. He proposes that the depth of darkness be considered a living space holding the hidden dimension that exceeds our visual perception, not the dimension added to only length and breadth. The depth, articulated by Merleau-Ponty, signifies a "total voluminosity" behind the visible flesh, which, therefore, can be perceived by touch as well as sight (Cataldi 67).

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* provides an imagination of the reversibility of touch and sight, bringing about seeing as touching, and touching as penetrating, as exemplified in Mellors's bathing spectacle—a visual picture that touches the perceiver's body to the point that the scene penetrates to the inside of her body. It is remarkable that in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* the level of touches goes deeper and deeper as the narrative proceeds. Lawrence refers to touch on the skin as "a quiver of exquisite pleasure," which occurs

when Mellors touches Connie's "warm soft body, and touch[es] her navel for a moment in a kiss" (130). Touching "the delicate, warm, secret skin" of Connie's waist and hips, putting "his face down" and rubbing "his cheek against her belly and against her thighs again and again," Mellors marvels at the tenderness of her skin. He exclaims, "Eh! What it is to touch thee!" feeling "the magnificent throb of beauty" felt by touching the skin, which Lawrence depicts as "warm, live beauty of contact, so much deeper than the beauty of vision"—yet still "incomprehensible and even a little despicable" to Connie at this stage (142).

Touch on the skin evolves to deeper and more intense bodily contacts, however. Connie is drawn to realize "the depth of the other thing in her" (154) as a consequence of discarding her "self-will in her breast" and giving herself away to "strange rhythms flushing up into her with a strange rhythmic growing motion, swelling and swelling till it filled all her cleaving consciousness": "the unspeakable motion that was not really motion, but pure deepening whirlpools of sensation swirling deeper and deeper through all her tissue and consciousness, till she was one perfect concentric fluid of feeling" (152). The lover's touch, "so fathomless, so soft, so deep and so unknown," replaces the cold and formal kiss that has completely gone out of the relationship between Connie and Clifford, and it makes her feel that she is "very different from her old self" because touch affects "the depths of her womb" in which she feels like flowing and alive like a child (154-55). The experience of touching-being touched makes Connie feel that she is "very different from her old self and as if she [is] sinking deep, deep to the centre of all womanhood and the sleep of creation" (154). The subsequent lovemaking scene, in

which Connie finally reaches sexual consummation, presents the utter collapse of the boundary between the self and the world, as the narrator identifies Connie with a part of Nature “Ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass” (200).

In accordance with the deeper touch affecting “all her plasma,” Connie is left “in a soft, shuddering convulsion,” parted from her old fear of touch, and realizes “all the loveliness” of “the dark thrust of peace and a ponderous, primordial tenderness” in mutual touch (200). Here Connie’s hands are touching Mellors’s “pure and delicate” body, and this touch triggers the revelation of “the unspeakable beauty,” mediated through the flesh, the visible space housing the invisible still-life-within (201).

Although Mellors’s naked body gave Connie a sense anxiety about her taste for beauty, at this moment his bodily parts such as his buttocks and penis, “a strange heavy weight of mystery,” are fully embraced as threshold of beauty, leading her to the realization of beauty in touch. When Connie’s “hands came timorously down his back, to the soft, smallish, globes of the buttocks,” says the narrator, she feels a “sudden little flame of new awareness,” a certain kind of beauty she had previously wanted to resist (201). In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence brings touch as the driving force for beauty’s, assuming that touch revives the collapsed nearness between the subject and the object in the civilized culture by allowing the perceiver to realize the primordial depth of the perceived. In this way, the novel suggests that the aesthetic participant reaches the point at which she can feel the unrestrained flow of beauty through her body, rather than remain a confused observer both loving and hating the mediocre scene far from her culture’s aesthetic standard.

Lawrence's interest in touching the depth of the body is connected to his contempt for the obsession of the English bourgeois with clothes, indicative of their superficial fascination for only the surface appearances, rather than the naked body itself. In the "Introduction of These Paintings," Lawrence deplores the fact that "the coat is really more important than the man" among English people, and he criticizes the way they use clothes as tools for hiding their fear of body: "It is amazing how important clothes suddenly become, how they cover the subject. An old Reynolds colonel in a red uniform is much more a uniform than an individual, and as for Gainsborough, all one can say is: What a lovely dress and hat! What really expensive Italian silk!" (*Phoenix*, 560). The "bodiless" Clifford, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is also mocked by his extreme care for clothes, the material stuff aptly concealing the "void" or emptiness in him. Early in the novel, says the narrator about Clifford's dress code, "[. . .] he was just as carefully dressed as ever, by his expensive tailors, and he wore the careful Bond Street neckties just as before, and from the top he looked just as smart and impressive as ever" (12). In all its aspects and manifestations, we can say that Lawrence's engagement of feeling toward the unseen interior body aims to criticize the Western overemphasis on vision that perpetuates the two-dimensional, bodiless representation of reality, which Lawrence disparagingly calls in "Art and Morality" (1925) "the Kodak image," a representation of the world that turns matter into contour.

Lawrence was desperate to repel an artist's disembodiment of substantial bodies, a pervasive mode of representation appealing to a wide range of artists and writers influenced by the metaphysical discourse in which spirit is considered superior to body.

For Lawrence, touching-being touched is essential for experiencing the moment of beauty, paralleled with the epiphany in other modernist writings but—unlike Joyce’s optical illumination—intended to produce tactile impacts and to evoke the feeling of ecstasy. As a repository of still-life-within, the body—the physical space characterized by its depth, warmth, and softness—becomes the road of invisible beauty; bodily touch then stimulates beauty’s path and awakens one’s sensitivity to the emergence of beauty, as if touch had a magical effect. Whether a touch is a direct connection between skins or an indirect one sprung from the translation of seeing to touching, the experience of touching-being touched enables beauty’s medium, the body, to be affected, and consequently, beauty penetrates beneath surface appearances. Because the body is the passage for beauty, Lawrence conceived of an artist’s disembodiment of bodies as what collapses the bridge between the beauty and the perceiver.

Lawrence found it imperative to restore the body because the making of abstract bodies not only reflects the division within the human psyche itself, but also brings about the separation between men and beauty. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Tommy Duke warns Connie against the danger of effacing the body in this aspect, employing the metaphor of a plucked apple to express the disjunction between body and spirit: he proclaims, “but once you start the mental life you pluck the apple. You’ve severed the connection between, the apple and the tree: the organic connection. And if you’ve got nothing in your life but the mental life, then you yourself are a plucked apple. . . you’ve

fallen off the tree” (37).<sup>47</sup> By the metaphor “a plucked apple,” Lawrence implies the unnaturalness of the lost connection between body and spirit, which he refers to elsewhere as “the worm, the foul serpent” (*Phoenix* II, 247). A series of Lawrence’s essays displays his will-to-correct the metaphysical separation between the body and the spirit. Lawrence criticizes the mode of effacing substantial bodies, for example, in such essays as “Surgery for the Novel—Or a Bomb” where he condemns the English Romantic poets’ evaporation of bodies in their idealization of “spiritual” beauty, rooted in the philosophy of “Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant” (*Phoenix*, 520). In the 1929 essay, Lawrence makes much the same criticism of the Romantic poets. He accuses Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats of escaping the body: “Shelley is pure escape: the body is sublimated into sublime gas. Keats is more difficult—the body can still be felt dissolving in waves of successive death” (*Phoenix*, 562).<sup>48</sup>

In the “Introduction to These Paintings” essay, Lawrence demonstrates his idea of a “good” work of art that is inherently visual but at the same time evokes tactile feelings arising from its corporeal qualities. In contrast with the “plucked” apples, expressed as

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<sup>47</sup> Among Lawrence’s characters, it is Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love* who explicitly reveals his disgust with the act of grasping. In conversation with Ursula Brangwen, Birkin brings the metaphor of over-ripped apples hanging on “their old positions” to criticize those who are clutching themselves to social clichés because of the sense of fear in their mind. Says Birkin, “Why? Why are people all balls of bitter dust? Because they won’t fall off the tree when they’re ripe. They hang on to their old positions when the position is overpast, till they become infested with little worms and dry-rot” (*Women in Love*, 126).

<sup>48</sup> In the 1919 essay “Poetry of the Present” (1919), Lawrence distinguishes the poetry of the beginning and the end—the “finality and the perfection” made by Shelley and Keats—from the poetry of the “immediate present” with “life surging itself into utterance at its very wellhead” (*Phoenix*, 218-20). For Lawrence, out of the Romantic poets is Blake the exception: he argues, “Blake is the only painter of imaginative pictures, apart from landscape, that England has produced” (*Phoenix*, 560).



“bad” apples severed from the organic connection with the tree in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Cézanne’s good apples may restore the fullness of the body. For Lawrence, Cézanne’s apples retain their depth-dimension, translate seeing to touching, and bear the beauty of silent but dynamic and vital life inhering in their being. In other words, the painted apples have thick corporeal bodies, bearing pulsing lives beneath the surface and revealing the beauty flowing from within, while leaving the onlooker shocked by their tangible effects. According to Lawrence, the particular strength of Cézanne’s paintings lies in his subversive attempt to give corporeal qualities to the painted apples, in his recovering their “all-aroundness” and “insideness” by seeking to express “the appleyness” of the apples—referring to the existential autonomy of objects living beyond our perception. Lawrence states in regard with Cézanne’s art: “it is the appleyness” that carries with it also the feeling of knowing the other side as well, the side the [viewer] don’t see, the hidden side. . . The eyes see only fronts, and the mind, on the whole, is satisfied with fronts. But intuition needs all-aroundness, and instinct needs insideness” (*Phoenix*, 579). Despite the obtrusion of fear of the physical body, coinciding with the spread of syphilis in Europe (in Lawrence’s discussion), Cézanne struggled to fight against this fear. In attempting to create a radical alternative to the disembodied bodies that Lawrence calls mental clichés, Cézanne “wanted something that was neither optical nor mechanical nor intellectual” (*Phoenix*, 578).

As Lawrence invites us to see it, his emphasis on the deep inner life of Cézanne’s apples reveals the limitation of optical vision, and calls for renouncing the ultimate humanization of things that we perceive. Lawrence argues that Cézanne’s effort to

present the “appleyness” of apples redefines the subject–object relationship, in that it challenges the tendency of privileging the perceiver over the perceived object. For Lawrence, Cézanne’s apples manifest “the appleyness of the apple” on canvas, which echoes Heidegger’s concept, the thingness of the thing, meaning the true reality of Being, fully articulated in “The Origin of the Work of Art” where Heidegger argues that Van Gogh’s painting of a peasant woman’s shoes manifests the thingness of things—the shoesness of the shoes—related to the core of their ontological existence as Being, rather than as commodities exchanged for their use-value.<sup>49</sup>

In his emphasis on the “appleyness” of apples manifested in Cézanne’s paintings, Lawrence challenges the subject-oriented optical vision that has been privileged in metaphysical philosophical discourse. Finding “truth-to life representation” in Cézanne’s apples, he proposes that Cézanne’s paintings embody the artist’s attempt “to shove the apple away from [himself], and let it live of itself” (*Phoenix*, 567). Unlike other impressionist painters distorting the true nature of objects by relying too much on

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<sup>49</sup> Heidegger’s later essay “The Thing” (1949) scrutinizes the concept of the thing itself, which signifies the ontological conditions of the thing, independent of a human subject’s use of it. Heidegger’s 1949 essay regards each entity as an autonomous subject. It is no wonder that Heidegger has come into focus for scholars exploring Lawrence’s interest in the thing itself. Paul Eggert, Ann Fernihough, and others draw on the affinities between Lawrence’s and Heidegger’s aesthetic philosophy. See Fernihough, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (1993); Eggert, “C. S. Pierce, D. H. Lawrence, and Representation: Artistic Form and Polarities” (1997).” Eggert’s essay examines the relevance of Pierce to Lawrence, relating these writers’ philosophy to Heidegger’s concept of the thing itself. Eggert assumes that Heidegger’s idea of the thing itself challenges “the Kantian and Enlightenment tradition of rational argumentation based upon the subject-object split” (98). See Del Ivan Janik, “Toward ‘Thingness’: Cézanne’s Painting and Lawrence’s Poetry.” In this essay, Janik argues that Lawrence’s essays on the paintings of Cézanne—“Art and Morality” (1925) and “Introduction to Theses Paintings” (1929)—can be read as descriptions of his poetic development. In investigating Lawrence’s artistic vision inspired by Cézanne’s paintings, Janik analyzes Lawrence’s poems such as “The Wilde Common,” “The Hands of the Betrothes,” “Gloire de Dijon,” and other works collected in *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923).

mental-visual perception, argues Lawrence, Cézanne doubted the optical vision that had fostered subject-dominant consciousness at the expense of the non-penetrating, non-visual imagination central to perceive the non-mental quality of things. The consequence is that Cézanne's apples manifest their thingness, which resides beyond the scope of our eyesight, calling for our renunciation of the infinite eye—I. For Lawrence, the appleyness of Cézanne's apples manifest their ontological qualities as things and express their original beauty.

Lawrence praises the palpability of Cézanne's unstable apples in his essay. For him, the apples on canvas are not simply "visual" objects, but provide the viewer with tactile feelings, as if the apples are touching the viewer's body. Lawrence observes that Cézanne's apples, which are about to topple from the table and express "the real existence of the body" are suitable for inventing a proximate contact with the viewer (*Phoenix*, 568), The apples embrace the awareness of touch, and require non-visual senses for "grasping what we may call a complete truth, or a complete vision" (*Phoenix*, 574). Lawrence finds tactility in otherwise purely visual works of art, Cézanne's apples, echoing Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Cézanne's paintings, articulated in an essay titled "Cézanne's Doubt" where he argues that Cézanne's works of art express the internal vibration of things, rather than reproducing the predominant aesthetic modes of impressionists' paintings.

From Lawrence's view, the tactility in Cézanne's apples was an aesthetic "revolution," which "nobody, apparently, has been able to carry on" (*Phoenix*, 578). Unlike a majority of impressionists and postimpressionists, said to "dissolve" bodies into

“the sunlight-and-shadow scheme,” Cézanne hoped to fight with such an artistic “cliché” in his time and to “touch the world of substance once more with the intuitive touch, to be aware of it with intuitive awareness, and to express it in intuitive terms” (*Phoenix*, 578). As a consequence of his efforts “to displace out present mode of mental-visual consciousness,” Cézanne finally succeeded in endowing his objects with the “appleyness,” embodied “the awareness of touch,” and thereby, opened up a new way to perceive their depth and palpability (*Phoenix*, 578).

Lawrence emphasizes Cézanne’s “struggle” to express the physical qualities of things and to go beyond a cliché, defined as “a worn-out memory that has no more emotional or intuitional root, and has become a habit” (*Phoenix*, 576). Lawrence states, “the most interesting figure in modern art, and the only really interesting figure, is Cézanne: and that, not so much because of his achievement as because of his struggle” (*Phoenix*, 571). On the one hand, as Lawrence puts it, Cézanne “wanted something that was neither optical nor mechanical nor intellectual” to substitute for cliché, a mode of representation subjugated to optical vision, and as his paintings of apples reveal, Cézanne successfully embodied the impersonality of things on canvases by painting their “insideness” and “all-aroundness,” rather than only their fronts (*Phoenix*, 578-79). On the other hand, Cézanne was incapable of entirely smashing the cliché he sought to avoid, although he knew that the “cliché” is “the deadly enemy” for a true artist (*Phoenix*, 579). As Lawrence observes, Cézanne was from a bourgeois family—a specified social group particularly afraid of physical bodies, which then indicates that he might internalize the cliché pertaining to the impressionists and postimpressionists. Hence, Cézanne had to

“fight with his own cliché,” the so-called “hydra-headed” or “optical” cliché, which the impressionists fell at once into whenever they tried to represent the things themselves (*Phoenix*, 578). Except his paintings of apples—regarded as Cézanne’s greatest achievement, Cézanne could not go so far as to create what he wanted because the cliché obsessed his ego more often than not. Lawrence argues:

And Cézanne was bitter. He had never, as far as his life went, broken through the horrible glass screen of the mental concepts, to the actual touch of life. In his art he had touched the apple, and that was a great deal. He had intuitively known the apple and intuitively brought it forth on the tree of his life, in paint. But when it came to anything beyond the apple, to landscape, to people, and above all to nude woman, the cliché had triumphed over him. The cliché had triumphed over him, and he was bitter, misanthropic. (*Phoenix*, 581)

Throughout Cézanne’s life-long career, there were only a few moments when he went beyond the cliché, and most of his artworks fail to express the real appleyness because of the cliché present in his consciousness: “the cliché obtruded,” and triumphed over him (*Phoenix*, 581). The sense of incapability and other people’s contempt made Cézanne bitter and anti-social, but he embraced “a bitter fight” with the obstacles, confronting himself with the tension within his mind, a source of psychic division (*Phoenix*, 576): one desire for avoiding the cliché and the other desire for making his arts acceptable to others.

Just as Cézanne's strength derives from his struggle between opposite desires, according to Lawrence, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie explores beauty while she is still under the sign of repression. Connie not only feels reluctant to take her adoration of Mellors's bathing as a natural fascination, but is tempted to ridicule her own taste for beauty, except for the moment of her sexual consummation when she is immersed in the rhythmical wave of lovemaking. Connie's split consciousness is often visible when she looks back on the fascinating impressions affecting her body as well as eyes. Nevertheless, as in Cézanne's example, Connie's honesty in acknowledging her double impulses is central to reaching the pleasure of beauty: she embraces her self-doubt, and significantly, probes her shrunken body in the mirror after returning from the wood in which she sees Mellors's bathing.<sup>50</sup> She does not conceal from herself the desire to mock the vulgarity of the mediocre scene she observed, even though it may risk presenting her as a snob by divulging the class-consciousness and hyper-culturalized mind that haunt her in spite of her self-conscious effort to pursue freedom and cosmopolitan ideals in politics, art and love. What frequently baffles Connie is that the beauty captivating her is discovered from supposedly insignificant spectacles like Mellors's body. Even getting at the moment of sexual consummation, Connie remains divided in her mind, aware of the insignificance of Mellors's body, "the poor,

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<sup>50</sup> This makes a remarkable contrast with a scene in *The Rainbow* (1915). In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence describes Anna's ritualistic dance in front of the fire, which seems as a celebration of the fertility of Mother Earth. But her dance upsets Will profoundly, completely absorbed as he is in his spiritual, mystical aspirations. While Anna takes her earthly revenge by affirming the power of her procreative body, he cannot bear even to look at his body, even though some unconscious response within his own clothes and repressed body prevents him from actually leaving the scene: "[he] watched, and his soul burned in him. He turned aside, he could not look, it hurt his eyes. . . her belly, big, strange, terrifying uplifted to the Lord. . . He waited obliterated" (153). See *The Rainbow* (Kent: Mackays of Chatham, 1995).

insignificant, moist little penis,” and the “ridiculous bouncing of the buttocks” (197). Indeed, the oscillation between adoration and judgment bothers Connie when she goes through an exploration of beauty, but her frustration and self-doubt are a primary condition for reaching beauty. Connie’s discontent with her Wragby life gives her eye-opening opportunities to experience a new mode of beauty, while her self-doubt lets her break the boundary of the hyperbolized self-conviction and move toward the awareness of mutual touch.

### **When Flowers Meet the Human Flesh**

In *Touch* (1996) Gabriel Josipovici says, “we are embodied, and it is our bodies which give us common access to the physical world; in other words we are participators, not spectators, and it is through embodiment that we participate” (6). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, who paid special attention to the access to the outside world afforded through our bodies, Josipovici uses Merleau-Ponty’s famous account of the touching-touched hands to expand his discussion of the experience of intersubjectivity taking place at the moment of touch. In elucidating Lawrence’s embodiment of touch, a passage to beauty, I hope to make Josipovici’s distinction between “meeting” and “grasping” a point of departure for our discussion. Josipovici writes in the 1996 book, “when I shake hands with someone, as Merleau-Ponty again notes, I am conscious not of grasping a hand, flesh and bone, but of meeting someone” (18). As Josipovici puts it, we can say that touching allows us to feel another subject as a whole beyond the empirical analysis; at the same time, touching, producing the reciprocal feeling, is

supposed to be a soft, delicate, and tender approach to others. Touching is a way to meet or encounter others, rather than to possess the other.

Tender touch, leading us to encounter another individual, is what Lawrence strove to embody in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, as the writer deploys the term “tenderness” over and over in describing the quality of touches between Connie and Mellors: “natural physical tenderness, which is the best, even between men” (*LCL*, 334-35); “tender touch, without losing his pride or his dignity of his integrity as a man” (*LCL*, 337). However, it may appear contradictory to characterize Lawrence’s touch as tenderness, in that he considers touching as penetrating, and penetration tends to be considered an act of violence in literary and critical discourses. Such an inconsistency has baffled a number of literary scholars. Many critics have attacked Lawrence’s imagination of tenderness in examining the penetrating physical contact between Connie and Mellors because the touch does not appear “tender” at all. A host of feminist scholars express their anger against Lawrence’s description of Connie and Mellors’s sexual consummation, where Connie is said to be born “a woman” by the help of Mellors, while the male lover restores “the strange potency of manhood” (200). Not surprisingly, the lovemaking scene, which embodies the deep penetrating touch, has engendered caustic feminist critique in regard to Lawrence’s representation of men and women in relationship. Viewing Connie and Mellors’s sexual consummation as the representation of phallocentric imagination, feminist scholars argue that Connie submits to the sexually superior male, while purged of her modern woman self (Burden 221). Influenced by Simone de Beauvoir, Millett’s critique of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* cites masculinist



statements uttered by Mellors, and presents Lawrence as a subtle conveyor of a dogmatic masculine message.<sup>51</sup> If Carolyn Heilbrun is displeased with his last novel for its “demeaning of the female figure” (101), Anne Smith calls Lawrence a prejudiced man who lacks the ability “to come to terms with women as full human beings” (45). In *Semiotics and Interpretation* (1982), Robert Sholes asserts that Mellors’s contempt of a woman’s desire for clitoral simulation affirms “the bare bones of a Freudian scenario” (140). These feminist scholars consider Connie’s submission to Mellors an unforgivably offensive representation reflecting the author’s male chauvinist fantasy.

Those critics and writers who defend Lawrence’s penetrating touch associate his valorization of penetration with his orientation toward primordial darkness and hedonistic pleasure pertaining to the pre-industrial culture. Focusing on Lawrence’s interest in primitivism and purely instinctual touch, Mark Spilka, Kingsley Widmer, Paul Poplawski and many others discuss the writer’s transgression of the boundary of verbal communication, and his replacement of language with primitive touch, silent, mysterious and penetrating. These scholars claim that Connie acquires Mellors’s intuition and Bacchanalian energies: at this point they explicitly or implicitly follow Nietzsche, who distinguished the Dionysian element in art, the god of intoxication, and the forces of

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<sup>51</sup> Marina Ludwig is a recent writer who opposes the identification between Mellors and Lawrence. In the article “‘A Democracy of Touch’: Masochism and Tenderness in D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (2011), she suggests that while Lawrence’s “social, political, and aesthetic views are ventriloquized by Mellors, it would be a mistake to conclude that he is the author’s alter ego” because, “there is the fact that there are only one or two moments when we are given access to his consciousness” (30).

nature, from the Apollonian, the god of individuation, form, and order; for these critics, Lawrence of course belongs to the former category.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the critics' contrasting views of Lawrence's embodiment of penetrating touch, they share at least the assumption that the sexual consummation scene, which invites the most penetrating physical touch, is the most emblematic of Lawrence's imagination of beauty in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In my opinion, however, such a presupposition engenders a reductive reading of Lawrence, simplifying him as either a male chauvinist or a priest of the cult of primitivism. Although the sexual consummation scene remains a crucial epiphany in putting forth the revelation of beauty, a later scene following the deepest physical contact embodies an apparently different mode of touch that looks lighter, more tantalizing and more playful than it does extreme, solemn and primordial. To be precise, chapter 15 in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* includes a rather silly and hilarious scene, in which Connie and Mellors wreath flowers about each other's bodies, calling one another's pubic zones "Lady Jane" and "John Thomas." Here we find a tantalizing and non-penetrating touch between bodies and flowers. On a rainy day, the lovers are dancing in the wood after making love, and while Connie takes some rest in Mellors's hut, he returns from the wood with flowers:

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<sup>52</sup> See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, first published in 1872. Joan Ramon Resina is one of the critics who focus on Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian elements in reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*: "Connie sees herself in her role of frenzied Dionysian votary" (365), and to substantiate such claim, quotes from the novel: "Ah! yes, to be passionate like a Bacchante, like a Bacchanal feeling through the woods, to call on Iacchos, the bright phallus that had no independent personality behind it, but was pure god-servant to the woman! The man, the individual, let him not dare intrude. He was but a temple-servant, the bearer and keeper the bright phallus, her own": a passage from chapter 10 (p. 154) in which Mellors and Connie reach sexual consummation.

He had brought columbines and campions, and new-mown hay, and oaktufts and honeysuckle in small bud. He fastened fluffy young oak-sprays round her breasts, sticking in tufts of bluebells and campion: and in her navel he poised a pink campion flower, and in her maiden-hair were forget-me-nots and woodruff.

“That’s you in all your glory! he said. “Lady Jane, at her wedding with John Thomas.” And he stuck flowers in the hair of his own body, and wound a bit of creeping-jenny round his penis, and stuck a single bell of a hyacinth in his navel. She watched him with amusement, his odd intentness. And she pushed a campion flower in his moustache, where it stuck, dangling under his nose. (272)

Even readers praising *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* have paid minor attention to the above scene while emphasizing other love making scenes, especially the moment when the lovers reach sexual consummation. For example, Julian Moynahan, who expresses his passion for *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, says that the aforementioned scene strikes him for its silliness, though he regards “some of the renderings of sexual intimacy” as “beautiful and convincing” (84). This moment can appear ludicrous and eccentric at first glance, but the lovers’ delicate touch with flowers illuminates one of Lawrence’s ideas of beauty built on “tenderness,” which connotes “softness, sensitivity, pliability, giving way, lack of resistance” in Lawrence’s context (Ludwigs 8).

What is the particular significance of the scene in which the lovers are putting flowers on each other’s flesh? On the one hand, it seems that the act of putting flowers

on human flesh retains will-to-restoration of a tender touch, alleged to disappear in the post-World War I period, providing a new mode of encountering the lover without an intention to possess the other. As the soft texture of the flowers implies, the contact between flowers, a part of Nature, and human bodies is accomplished on the basis of renouncing any possessive gesture toward the other. The moment of touching flowers on human bodies reflects Lawrence's repulsion toward the spread of self-assertion and willfulness, a post-world War I psychic phenomenon, according to Lawrence, accompanying two seemingly different symptoms: either the absence of physical touch or a perverse kind of touch—the grasping of other bodies.

According to Lawrence, inward fear—often turned into anger—became a universal postwar phenomenon, permeating people of both low and high class. The isolation that Connie and Clifford feel with one another stems from the husband's physical paralysis, received from the war, which in turn produces emotional paralysis. Despite Lawrence's earlier fascination with working class peoples' vitality expressed in the novel such as *Sons and Lovers*, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the colliers do not much differ from their upper class master Clifford in terms of their internal anger. The colliers at Tervershall, now working in the modernized world, full of the noise of machines, “were talking about a strike, and it seemed to Connie there again it was not a manifestation of energy, it was the bruise of the war that had been in abeyance, slowly rising to the surface and creating the great ache of unrest, and stupor of discontent” (*LCL*, 52). The Tervershall mine emerges as sterile a place as Clifford's mansion, owing to the “sharp, wicked electric light,” “the rattle-rattle of the screens at the pit,” and “the puff of

the winding-engine, the clink-clink of shunting trucks, and the hoarse little whistle of the colliery locomotives” (*LCL*, 10), all of which are suggestive of the technocratic civilization’s insensitivity to human touch. Due to the influence of the bruise of the war and its twin brother, mechanization, there is no safe space immune from the war trauma in the 1920s.

Lawrence was mentally stricken by the devastating influence of World War I. He once told Lady Ottoline Morrell about his feeling of estrangement during the war, and how much he longs to achieve happiness: “The only thing now to be done is either to go down with the ship, sink with the ship, or, as much as one can, leave the ship, and like a castaway live a life apart. . . . As far as I possibly can, I will stand outside this time, I will live my life, and, if possible, be happy, though the whole world slides in horror down into the bottomless pit” (Worthen 1979; 86). The experience of the First World War was a watershed in early-twentieth-century European literature, impelling writers to register the shock of the war in literary texts. Malcolm Bradbury explains the link between the war and modernists’ impulse to write the experience: “The First World War undoubtedly helped ratify modernism . . . it intensified the sense of historical disorder and irony that many experimental writers had begun to probe” (1976; 193).<sup>53</sup> As a

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<sup>53</sup> See Bradbury, “The Denuded Place: War and Form in Parade’s End and U.S.A” in *The First World War in Fiction*, edited by Holger Klein (London: Macmillan, 1976). Although the writers’ literary strategies vary one another, the graveness of the war urged them to write something about it: World War I led them either to actively think about its horrible impacts or to evade them. As Claire M. Tylee introduces in “War, Modernisms, and the Feminized ‘Other’” a section in *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*, Bonnie Kime Scott, ed. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007), the war experience became the primary subject matter for several modernists to develop their literary imagination, allowing them to create several aesthetic strategies such as fragmentation, free indirect speech, and imagism, which seem “particularly appropriate to the dissociation and alienation typical of war experience” (519).

writer who witnessed the war, Lawrence had to confront the issue of the war-affected consciousness in his journey to beauty during the post-war years, in that the war trauma damages the passage to beauty—the tender touch on human bodies.<sup>54</sup>

What did the First World War mean to Lawrence, and why did he believe that the war prevented the experience of the pleasure of tender beauty? In his letter of 31 January 1915 to Lady Cynthia Asquith, Lawrence confesses, “The War finished me: it was the spear through the side of all sorrows and hopes” (*Selected Letters*, 87).<sup>55</sup>

Cynthia Asquith also made a diary note about Lawrence’s response to the war: “the war he sees as the pure *suicide* of humanity—a war without *any* constructive ideal in it, just pure senseless destruction” (Asquith 89). Lawrence saw “the unchanging pointlessness of the war” as “a final demonstration of the end of man’s purposive belief in society (and in himself)” (Worthen 1979; 83). As the letters and diaries suggest, Lawrence was appalled by the war even in its early stages. Why did the first few months of the war have such a shocking impact on Lawrence? As John Worthen illustrates in *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider* (2005), when Lawrence revealed his profound hatred of the war, he aimed to react “to the very idea of the war, rather than to anything that had

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<sup>54</sup> Lawrence’s depiction of touch predates the First World War. The theme of touch and tenderness is central to his prewar novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), where Lawrence presents Mrs. Morel and Miriam’s platonic attitude as an obstacle for spontaneity and tenderness in our life. Among a host of critics, Mark Spilka makes this point in “Lawrence’s Quarrel with Tenderness” (1988). In Spilka’s 1988 essay Miriam’s platonic attitude brings lots of repressions of physical instincts when she contacts with Paul. Miriam likes only a “kiss in abstract purity,” that which Paul, the artist figure, could not give. Focusing on Miriam’s touch-avoidance, Spilka calls Miriam “clearly a spiritual vampire” (225). Spilka aligns Miriam with the later female figure Hermione (in *Women in Love*) in such a respect.

<sup>55</sup> See D. H. Lawrence, *The Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

occurred” (Worthen 2005; 150). Even before the First World War broke out, Lawrence had rejected the political propaganda spreading in continental Europe and Russia, as well as the inhuman mechanization permeating all levels of English culture. Anticipating modern warfare, Lawrence suggested that the upcoming war would be “an affair entirely of machines, with men attached to the machines as the subordinate part thereof, as the butt is the part of a rifle” (Worthen 2005; 149). At the time “when the actual ‘war and its horrors’ came, they did no more than confirm what he had felt from the start” (Worthen 2005; 150). Even more than the war itself, the mechanical “ideas” constituting warfare appear hideous to Lawrence, and later on, individuals affected by the war emerged as major figures in his post-war novels.

After the Great War, English society witnessed a surge in political ideologies with the spread of communism and fascism. As Pericles Lewis sketches out in his 2007 book, during the 1920s English writers on the left were responding to the sociopolitical crisis in the way of politicizing art, while conservatives tended to aestheticize political life to assuage the horror of the war and to assuage postwar impacts on the individual and on the social body. After the First World War, British fascists were empowered by constituting the British Union of Fascists, the political organization led by Oswald Mosley, which propagated nationalist ideologies in reaction to the new sociopolitical crisis in the early twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> Lawrence equates both the fascists and the socialists with “bullying” in his *Movements in European History*, written during 1918

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<sup>56</sup> See Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987). In this book, Thurlow explains that British fascist thoughts had germinated in the pre-1914 era, but it is World War I that sparked the British Fascist movement led by Oswald Mosley.

and 1919. He argues, “The forcing of one man’s will over another man is bullying. We know what it is, we experienced it during the War. It is a bad, degrading thing. It degrades both the bully and those who are bullied” (317). For Lawrence it appeared that the Fascists imposed their wills on others by means of political propaganda or visual spectacle, just as the leftwing socialists tried to carry out their wills in the name of social revolution. As Eagleton notes in *The English Novel: An Introduction* (2005), Lawrence regarded fascism as “the most sinister example of right-wing radicalism in the modern age,” and “a spurious solution to the crisis of middle-class civilization” (259-60). From Lawrence’s view, both parties are guilty of propagating mechanical thoughts and ideologies by seeking to advance their egocentric purposes, which seemed utterly lustful to Lawrence. In keeping the “fundamental opposition to the war and to the spirit of war” (Eagleton 2005; 160), Lawrence remained critical of various self-assertions against fertility, life force, and the natural order. The politically pervasive hostility can emerge as the appearance of kindness, as Lawrence points out in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1929): underneath the seeming kindness of the English people there is “coldness of heart, a lack of heart, a callousness, that is very dreary”; “every man is a menace to every other man. . . . We are all extremely sweet and ‘nice’ to one another, because we merely fear one another” (57).

Since Lawrence viewed the First World War as the epicenter of the will-to-mastery, it is no surprise that he found the war to sin against the revelation of beauty in such a way that collapses the passage to the beautiful—the mutual touch between bodies. In the earlier period—when he noticed the life-killing influence of the war-related



consciousness on people and the whole society— Lawrence seemed more passionately driven to escape from his country, England, in seeking a utopian space immune from the social disease gulping England and other European nations. The foreword to *Women in Love*, appended to the novel just after the war, allows a glimpse into Lawrence's augmented inner anguish about the war consciousness. Using the metaphor of wrestling, a type of touch enacted by a willed-self, says Lawrence, "we are now in a period of crisis. Every man who is acutely alive is acutely wrestling with his own soul" (*Women in Love*, 486). From the breakout of the war to the mid-twenties, Lawrence had once aspired to transcend the unceasing emotional conflicts by escaping the English society, which drove him to imagine a self-sufficient, utopian community, which he called Ranamin.

Lawrence's desire for aloofness is basically predominant in the character of Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* before he falls in love with Connie. Mellors echoes Lawrence's resonant earlier figures such as Birkin, in that he stays alone, isolated from the communal society until touching-being touched (by) Connie. As a man traumatized by his wife's bullying and self-willed behavior, Mellors has been wary of intimate contacts with people. There are sufficient reasons why Mellors secludes himself from society: a string of unfulfilling love affairs gave him a fear of emasculation, and other people's obsession with money enhanced his misanthropic desire. In his abhorrence of upper-class snobbery, Mellors—rising to be a commissioned lieutenant—returned to his working class position after being forced to leave the army because of pneumonia.

In this novel, however, Lawrence places the detached man in a direct contact with Connie. Mellors strips away his "hard-shell," which calls for a step-up from his bad

memories, and sufferings in his marriage. It is remarkable that the term, “hard shell,” originally depicting Clifford, taking on “a hard, efficient shell of an exterior” (123), can also refer to Mellors. If Connie, clinging to “the remnants of the old England” in the leisured class” (178), is drawn to renounce her class-consciousness in getting into touch with her lover, Mellors is urged to open himself to the new mode of commitment, despite the fear of relationship haunting himself. After their one-night stand, Mellors feels more acutely lonely and miserable than ever because the physical contact revives his resigned longing for togetherness; on a starry and moonless night—a few days after experiencing the “warm, live beauty of contact” with Connie—he finds himself getting out of his cottage and approaching Connie’s mansion because he wants to be near her. In the last novel, the reclusive misanthropic Mellors reaches deep human touch, falling from his “old position”—aloofness.

In elaborating the symptoms of war consciousness, Lawrence embodies the ways in which the war consciousness has replaced a mutual tender touch with a perverse form of touch: a touch imposing life-killing pressure on the other—indicative of the nervous attachment between one another or the tension of the will. Since acquiring a heightened awareness of the destructive impacts of the war spirit on the life-giving tender touch, reminiscent of the image of wrestling in *Women in Love*, Lawrence dramatized how the war-affected mentality breaks the passage to beauty by engaging the ugliness of a perverse touch, derived from a purpose of enforcing one’s will upon others. In contrast with the touch of tenderness, Lawrence portrayed an image of “grasping,” the mode of touch pressing others with excessive and unpleasant power, opposing the gesture of

“encountering” introduced in Josipovici’s *Touch*. A sequence of Lawrence’s novels written in the 1920s are consistent in displaying how a war-affected person is eager to grasp other people, money, social status, and many other things. For example, if Clifford changes the targets of his grasping from Connie to Ivy Bolton, his nurse and caretaker, and from writing fictions to the development of his mines, the Irish playwright Michaelis grasps money and fame, purposefully exhibiting his anti-English sentiment as a means to make him a popular writer in the literary market during the 1920s. The narrator comments on him: “his isolation was a necessity to him; just as the appearance of conformity and mixing-in with the smart people was also a necessity” (27). Ironically, for both characters, the internal fear produces the act of grasping, and it gives birth to another behavior— a self-display: “This was the feeling that echoed and re-echoed at the bottom of Connie’s soul: it was all flag, a wonderful display of nothingness. At the same time a display. A display! A display! A display!” (53). Lawrence writes, “For Michaelis was even better than Clifford at making a display of nothingness. It was the last bit of passion left in these men: the passion for making a display” (53). Lawrence in this way unmasks the interwoven connection of fear, unhealthy grasping and displaying, while tracing the source of suppression of beauty.

The flower-flesh-touch scene in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* counteracts the violent pressing of a machine on the natural body. To examine one of the meanings of touching flowers on the human flesh, we should relate this moment with another episode, in which Clifford’s motorized wheelchair utterly crumples hyacinths and bluebells. In chapter 13, Clifford and Connie go into the woods, which are wonderfully beautiful in

early summer, and Clifford enjoys looking down on the flowers from the top of a hill: “Clifford stopped the chair at the top of the rise and looked down. The bluebells washed blue like flood-water over the broad riding, and lit up the downhill with a warm blueness” (214). Here Lawrence parodies Clifford’s will to move the wheelchair onto the hill, juxtaposing the motor chair with a warship, and Clifford with a heroic leader, referring to Walt Whitman’s line “O Captain, my Captain” in the “Memories of President Lincoln” section of *Leaves of Grass*:

And the chair began to advance slowly, joltingly down the beautiful  
broad riding washed over with blue encroaching hyacinths. O last of all  
ships, through the hyacinthian shallows! O pinnacle on the last wild  
waters, sailing in the last voyage of our civilization! Whiter, O weird  
wheeled ship, your slow course steering. Quiet and complacent, Clifford  
sat at the wheel of adventure in this old black hat and tweed jacket,  
motionless and cautious. O Captain, my Captain, our splendid trip is  
done! (*LCL*, 214)

The passage dramatizes the way Clifford’s “wheeled” machine rolls over the “blue encroaching hyacinths,” and accordingly he suffers a deflation in the comparison implicit in the Whitman allusion. Like a war leader, Clifford enters the forest and feels contented with his victory, but his splendid adventure is doomed to failure, a “ludicrous failure of ‘leadership’” as a “boss of industry,” when his wheelchair stops helplessly in a sea of hyacinths because of its broken engine (Jackson 181). Clifford calls Mellors to come and fix the wheelchair, but he has no idea of how to repair it. The incident triggers

a nervous tension because Mellors and Connie find that only pushing will move the impaired chair up, while Clifford refuses to call for help and insists on getting it up the hill on its own power, until it slips. After repeating efforts to start the obviously broken engine, Clifford hysterically treats the wheelchair with all the violent excesses of displaced libido: when “he made shattering efforts with the little motor,” Connie advises him, “you’ll only break the thing down altogether . . . “besides wasting your nervous energy” (218). Yet, “in savage impatience” and “yellow with anger”(221), Clifford keeps starting the motor again and again, making odd machinery noises.

The consequence of Clifford’s compulsion to start the motor chair is the destruction of the flowers, which mirrors the mechanical process of effacing the body of vital Nature. As the novel describes, “the chair gave a sort of scurry, reeled on a few more yards, and came to her end amid a particularly promising patch of bluebells” (219); Connie finds “the wretched and trampled bluebells” (221), and “the squashed bluebells” provide the dramatic backdrop of the tension raising the awkward silence: “the *tableau vivant* remained set among the squashed bluebells, nobody proffering a word” (222). Clifford’s motor chair, rolling over the flowers, stands for “the mechanistic world of capitalist production he embodies in the novel” (Luwigs 5). Epitomizing an opposite to the world of natural vitality, Clifford’s wheelchair—his alter ego—exercises industrial tyranny against the organic world from which he is divorced. Gavriel Ben-Ephraim links Clifford’s will toward self-extinction with the death-instinct, a seminal point in Freud’s essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in which Freud insists that “the aim of all life is death” (Ben-Ephraim 38). Ben-Ephraim acknowledges that the death drive is

found in every human being, saying that “insofar as man knows himself separate (the very function of the ego), he knows himself as something that will die. The will toward self-extinction is intrinsic to the ego, and it is to ensure the resolutorial achievement of death that the ego-instincts become the death-instincts” (143). However, in Clifford’s case, his “self-mechanization is a specific enactment of the dictum that “every ‘organism wishes to die. . . in its own fashion,’” which demonstrates that only a death-instinct drives Clifford (Ben-Ephraim 143). Clifford’s compulsion to start the already broken wheelchair embodies the very notion of a death-instinct, and his automatic behavior serves as a microcosm of the ego blotting out the organic nature of England. In this light, Ben-Ephraim states, Clifford’s machine-like compulsion “goes beyond the individual” because it signifies the conversion of “Thanatos into England’s national destiny” (143).

The wheelchair scene and the following scene of flower-flesh touch echoes an episode of in *Women in Love*, where Birkin experiences an inhuman touch in connection with Hermione, and rejuvenates his shattered body through the touch of flowers and trees. In the “Breadalby” chapter, an English aristocratic hostess, Hermione, complacently ruminates on her philosophy of education and beauty among her guests: says she “there can be no reason, no excuse for education, except the joy and beauty of knowledge in itself” (85).<sup>57</sup> Hermione gets into a verbal quarrel with Birkin, whom she

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<sup>57</sup> The chapter title refers to a Georgian aristocratic house. Hermione Roddice, a high priestess of culture, is modeled on Lady Ottoline Morell, a Bloomsbury hostess inviting Lawrence to her society. Hermione’s statement on beauty—“there can be no reason, no excuse for education, except the joy and beauty of knowledge in itself” (*Women in Love*, 85)—parallels the notion of mainstream Bloomsbury members. One might suppose that she is based on two women Lawrence personally knew in his life: Jessie Chambers and Lady Ottoline Morrell. Out of the two women, Lady Ottoline Morrell more strongly evokes Hermione in *Women in Love*. In fact,

loves, and a nervous tension between them follows their debate. Wary of the unhappy communication, Birkin feels like keeping a certain distance from Hermione while staying in her boudoir. When Hermione recognizes Birkin's recoil from her presence, however, she breaks down out of anger and approaches Birkin with a lapis lazuli paperweight put on her desk for the purpose of "touching," grasping instead of encountering, the elusive lover. The narrator of *Women in Love* describes Hermione's mind when she moves towards Birkin, as if she almost reaches sexual consummation: "[a] terrible voluptuous thrill ran down her arms—she was going to know her voluptuous consummation. . . What delight, what delight in strength, what delirium of pleasure! She was going to have her consummation of voluptuous ecstasy at last. It was coming!" (105). In the self-seeking ecstasy, Hermione strikes Birkin with the lapis lazuli—"almost breaking his neck, and shattering his heart"—and the act of clutching makes her complete "the fulfillment" of her "perfect ecstasy" (105). Likewise, Lawrence deliberately juxtaposes Hermione's ecstasy with a masturbatory arousal, which he considered a "personal and cultural vice that functionally hampered the development of dynamic, relational sexuality" (Cowan 1995, 69).<sup>58</sup> Lapis lazuli is often considered an object of beauty, but in this context the stone serves Hermione's masturbation, facilitating the release of her nervous energy, which is unfulfilled in her relationship

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she was Lawrence's acquaintance who gave him lapis lazuli paperweight as a gift, which Lawrence reimagines as Hermione's weapon. See James Ross Macdonald, "*Women in Love*." The Modernist Lab at Yale University. Web. June 8, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> See Cowan, "Lawrence, Freud and Masturbation," *Mosaic* 28 (1995): 69-98.

with Birkin. Without doubt, the stone negates the space for a tender touch between the human flesh of Birkin and Hermione.

The “Breadalby” chapter closes with Birkin’s physical contact with trees and flowers, which is resonant with Mellors’s and Connie’s flower-touch after Clifford’s motor chair crumpled flowers. Running away from the life-killing touch, Birkin wanders onto the wet hill where the young trees, grasses, and flowers tantalize his worn out body. Letting his body touch the flowers and the bushes, Birkin finds compensation in the pleasure of their tender touch that he has not found in human connections yet. He wants “to touch them all, to saturate himself with the touch of them all” (106), and takes off his clothes to feel the tenderness of the bodies of Nature. While touching handfuls of plants, Birkin finds the pleasure of touching-being touched (by) the flowers and trees; this appears “more delicate and more beautiful than the touch of any woman” (107). The narrator talks about Birkin’s momentary happiness at this moment: “how fortunate he was, that there was this lovely, subtle, responsive vegetation, waiting for him, as he waited for it; how fulfilled he was, how happy!” (107). In this way, Birkin’s touch with the trees and the flowers replaces the cold inhuman touch of the lapis lazuli-paperweight.

While Birkin’s alternative touch reflects Lawrence’s misanthropic desire as it is heated in the postwar period, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* makes a place for a mutual tender touch, taking three subjects as its protagonists—the lovers and the flowers—regardless of the writer’s “bleakest realization of the destructiveness of the industrial and the modern” in the postwar era (Stevens 141). Thus, touching the flowers to naked human flesh exists as an opposite power against the war’s mechanization of manhood in a way



to provide the image of an individual adopting a detached position toward the public. In challenge of the ascent of technology—which has alienated individuals from a loving connection with Nature—Connie and Mellors's touch with flowers creates a pseudo-religious performance in which they celebrate the renewed life of the flowers whose life seemed to be extinguished under the pressure of Clifford's wheelchair.

In the flower-flesh-touch scene, Mellors brings the flowers as a wedding bouquet for the marriage of Lady Jane and John Thomas—naming their private parts. Decorating Connie's pubic hair, navel, and breast with a bunch of flowers (forget-me-nots, jasmine, pomegranate flowers), Mellors touches the flowers on her body, take them off, and then kisses her naked body where the flowers were placed (273). By the time the lovers place the flowers on their bodies, they are implanting the flowers in the living soil—the human flesh—from the modern industrial territory governed by technological machines in the 1920s. Put it another way, the lovers' touch with the flowers creates a form of resistance against the mechanical principle of life, that which Clifford motor chair emblemizes, making a pair with Hermione's lapis lazuli in *Women in Love*. The scene of the flowers meeting the human flesh serves to release the lovers from the intrusion of modern technology during the post-World War I period.

The fictional space also portrays a way to emancipate the flowers, the poetic symbol of beauty, from the aestheticization of natural things. To be precise, flowers have been deployed as the symbol of beauty and romantic love, and artists and poets have used them as their subject matter. But Lawrence refused to adopt the conventional association between flowers and beauty because he believed it to engender a mechanical

beautification of things. For him, the self-oriented beautification of natural things makes it difficult to find the “atopos” of things, giving the prerogative to the self, not to the other. This is why Lawrence regarded the beautification of natural things as hindering the passage to beauty.

The narcissistic beautification of the flowers is evident in Clifford’s approach to flowers. When Clifford looks at the real flowers, he attempts to translate them into art: “[his] response is neither immediate nor vital, but indirect, literary and cerebral; typically, he substitutes words for feelings” (171). Here Lawrence might induce his readers to see in Clifford an allusion to John Keats, the Romantic poet whom he blamed for his annihilation of physical bodies in poetry. To respond to the wood-anemones, “wide open, as if exclaiming with the joy of life,” for example, Clifford cites first from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and then from Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” saying that the flowers are “sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes” and “Thou still unravished bride of quietness” (103). In Keats’ poem, the poetic speaker appreciates the Grecian urn and projects himself into its “flowery tale”; conversely, Clifford looks at the real flowers and tries to translate them into literary works. Clifford’s quotation from Keats’ ode infuriates Connie, who does not see any connection between the actual flowers and the words: says she, “Ravished is such a horrid word!” . . . “It’s only people who ravish things” (103). While Connie finds it absurd to confine the real flowers to the prison of words, Clifford remains incapable of feeling for the flowers without borrowing other poets’ lines. In chapter 13, which includes the wheelchair scene, Clifford sees that “all the flowers [are] there, the first bluebells in blue pools, like standing water,” and looking

at the forest flowers, he remarks, “it is so amazingly. What is quite so lovely as an English spring!”; upset, Connie thinks that Clifford’s address to the flowers sounds “as if even the spring bloomed by act of Parliament” (213). Clifford’s habit of translating the real things in art is repeated soon again: he says of the bluebell, “[it]’s colour in itself,” . . . “but useless for making a painting” (214). From Clifford’s view, the natural flowers seem to be nothing more than raw materials for composing a piece of poem. As he complains of the “poison-smelling lily” (238) and the odor of hyacinths (110) in chapter 9, Clifford lacks any apprehension of the beauty of natural things, keeping his obsession with beautifying the things that are actually beyond his will-to-mastery.

The lovers’ touch by the flowers implicitly opposes the mode of beautifying things, which takes place by trapping the external objects within the boundary of language. As the flower-touch-episode suggests, the vitality of the flowers ruptures the frame of artificial artifacts, such as the linguistic frame or the Keats’s well-wrought urn, understood as artistic form. In service to the inexhaustible beauty of the natural world, Lawrence emancipates the forest flowers from literary clichés or art forms, trying to loosen the aestheticization of real things. In fact, the flowers entering the episode are prone to technological invasion, but endlessly revived through “the process of blooming, seeding, dying and being reborn” (Sagar 219); they are not squeezed in the static frame of art, incapable of containing the infinite cycle of natural life.<sup>59</sup> Threading some forget-me-nots in Connie’s pubic hair, Mellors tells her:

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<sup>59</sup> In *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art* (1985), Keith Sagar focuses on Lawrence’s poems on flowers. The flowers of the wood fascinated Lawrence in reality, and he wrote a number of

“There! he said. “There’s forget-me-nots in the right place!”

She looked down at the milky odd little flowers among the brown maiden  
hair at the lower tip of her body.

“Doesn’t it look pretty! She said.

“Pretty as life,” he replied. (265)

As described in this paragraph, Mellors regards the beauty of the flowers as equivalent with life itself, which makes clear contrast with Clifford’s attitude toward natural things.

Since the wood and the flowers that drew Lawrence to a great extent, the flower-flesh-touch in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* might be considered a demonstration of the writer’s nostalgia for the pre-industrial, and pre-civilized culture, an ostensibly utopian territory facilitating the touch of tenderness. But the scene by no means simply represents the writer’s utopian yearning: this episode goes against the claim that Lawrence advocated a return to the ancient woods, the lost territory of a wild and preindustrial world.<sup>60</sup> The space of the flower-flesh touch registers the diminution of Lawrence’s utopian desire, a haunting vision that made Lawrence establish the utopian

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poems about flowers such as violets, forget-me-nots and bluebells in the volume of poetry *Birds, Beats and Flowers*, first published in 1923.

<sup>60</sup> Such a claim has been proposed by a host of critics from the 1950s to the recent period. For example, see Kingsley Widmer, “The Primitive Aesthetic: D. H. Lawrence” (1959); Julian Moynahan “*Lady Chatterley’s Lover: The Deed of Life*” (1959); Michael Squires, “Pastoral Patterns and Pastoral Variants” (1972); John Humma, “The Interpenetrating Metaphor: Nature and Myth in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (1983); Jae-Kyung Koh, “D. H. Lawrence’s World Vision of Cultural Regeneration in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” (2002). It seems notable that Christopher Butler introduces Lawrence as a writer “among the many modernists who were interested in what they thought of as primitive cultures, most African, and in adapting them within European art” in *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010) 37.

community Ranamin in a foreign country.<sup>61</sup> The wood, even laden with flowers with which Connie and Mellors are touching one another, does not guarantee a happy prospect for the lovers. Although Connie and Mellors had experienced an unconscious connection by the time they reached sexual consummation in the wood, at this moment the scene embraces the mixed feelings of the couple, which gives rise to an anti-climax element. It is possible to recognize the return of anxiety and fear in terms of their different social position and uncertain future prospectus. The lovers' flower-touch constitutes a part of their farewell party for remembering one another before Connie goes on a trip to Venice. This is why Mellors chooses "forget-me-knots" of all the flowers he brought in the quoted dialogue. Facing their upcoming separation, Mellors cannot hide his anxiety over the precariousness of their relationship. Mellors betrays his insecure feeling by uttering defensive parting words that sound somewhat hurtful to Connie: "I only want to find out just what you are after. But you don't really know yourself. You want to take time; get away and look at it. I don't blame you. I think you're wise. You may prefer to stay mistress of Wragby. I don't blame you" (267). Although Connie fearlessly submitted herself to Mellors by the time they reached orgasm, a slight sense of fear returns to her when Mellors is coming back from the wood with flowers. When Mellors comes near her with the flowers, Connie is "a little afraid of him, as if he were not quite human," curious of his "odd intentness" (271-72). Both Mellors and Connie remain aware of the risk of continuing their relationship in this way. But instead of purifying the remnant of suspicion and bitterness, the scene simply

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<sup>61</sup> See Eugene Goodheart, *The Utopian Vision of D. H. Lawrence* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1963).

presents the unresolved tension. For many readers, the lovers seem to free themselves “totally from sterile industrialism” (Squires 145), but apparently, the flower-flesh touch scene is presented in a way less idealistic or utopian than of the way the sexual consummation scene is presented.

Escaping from the sterile Wragby, one day in early spring, Connie goes for a walk through the wood where the wild daffodils “are the prettiest sight” (93):

Constance sat down with her back to a young pine-tree, that swayed against her with curious life, elastic and powerful, rising up. The erect, alive thing, with its top in the sun! And she watched the daffodils turn golden, in a burst of sun that was warm on her hands and lap. Even she caught the faint, tarry scent of the flowers. And then, being so still and alone, she seemed to get into the current of her own proper density. (94)

The wood— “still, stiller but yet guest with crossing sun,” “bright and yellow,” and pale with “endless little anemones, sprinkling the shaken floor”— arouses a strange excitement in Connie’s mind as if the place embodies a revitalizing code Connie is searching for (94). In reading the above landscape, critics tend to bring “a young pine-tree” as a focal point, while assuming that the pine-tree is a phallic symbol, as the tree is “rising up,” “erect” and “alive.” The pine tree is associated with the pre-industrial figure Mellors—alleged to epitomize the ancient sacred wood, or “the universal Flesh” (Harrison 37) or “the antithesis of the relentless industrial mechanism (Koh 101). But as attractive as such an explanation might be, it unfairly centralizes the pine tree, while putting the daffodils in the background; also, it does little to explain the analogy between

Mellors and “a lonely pistil of an invisible flower” (*LCL*, 93). As the critics have observed, the pine tree communicates to Connie in allusion to Mellors, but the crowd of daffodils are as central as the pine tree in Lawrence’s own description.

Lawrence encourages us to pay attention to the daffodils by describing Connie’s delicate approach to the flowers. The narrator says, Connie “rose, a little stiff, took a few daffodils, and went down. She hated breaking the flowers, but she wanted just one or two to go with her” (95). That Connie hesitates to break the flowers makes a clear contrast with that of Clifford whose wheelchair epitomizes the utter insensitivity to the flowers. The daffodils as well as the pine tree make up the landscape of the wood, capturing Connie’s attention. The harmonious coexistence of the tree and the flowers collapses the hierarchy between the tree and the flower, opposing the idea of phallogocentric oneness.<sup>62</sup> Later on Lawrence gives a remarkable focus to the anonymous flowers again. Chapter 12 begins with a visual elaboration of the flowers:

Connie went to the wood directly after lunch. It was really a lovely day, the first dandelions making suns, the first daisies so white. The hazel thicket was a lace-work, of half-open leaves, and the last dusty perpendicular of the catkins. Yellow celandines now were in crowds, flat open, pressed back in urgency, and the yellow glitter of themselves. It was broad, and full of pale abandon, thick-clustered primroses no longer shy. The lush, dark green of hyacinths was a sea, with buds rising like pale corn, while I in the riding the forget-me-nots were fluffing up, and

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<sup>62</sup> For Lawrence’s own reaction to Walt Whitman, see chapter 12 in *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1977) 171-87.

columbines were unfolding their ink-purple ruches, and there were bits of blue bird's eggshell under a bush. Everywhere the bud-knots and the leap of life! (188)

This quotation is one of the few passages independent of the author's preaching-rhetoric. Addressing the specific names of all the flowers Connie is looking at in the wood, Lawrence makes a list of the flowers such as celandines, primroses, hyacinths, the forget-me-knots, and columbines. That Lawrence calls the name of each flower is an attempt to commemorate the vital life of the forest flowers.

What seems remarkable is that pleasure at the sight of the landscape of the flowers in the wood, the natural space, is juxtaposed with the flowers in the garden of Clifford's house, a so-called English garden. By addressing the specific names of the forest flowers, Lawrence makes a textual space inscribing the natural beauty at the beginning of chapter 12, but the previous chapter, chapter 11, captures the flowers planted at the Wragby garden, and thereby raises a visual connection between the landscapes of these contrasting spaces. As Raymond Williams calls the modern English garden "the high point of agrarian bourgeois art" (1975; 124-125),<sup>63</sup> Lawrence was spontaneously attracted to wild nature, instead of to the garden, a man made-environment representing bourgeois sophistication, aesthetic cultivation and artificiality. While Lawrence longed for the pre-modern garden in the earlier period, resonant in his phrase "England, my England! But which is my England!" (*LCL*, 177), the modern English garden could not

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<sup>63</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975).



appeal to him as it is tainted with the traces of machine and money.<sup>64</sup> Tantamount to a denial of the organic connection between human beings and wild nature, the modern English garden seemed to be the antithesis of vital nature. The English garden in the 1920s emerges as a microcosm of the national condition in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* when Lawrence mentions the gardens belonging to an aristocratic capitalist, Squire Lesley Winter, an owner of the colliers and of the estate called Shipley. Behind the coal-mining village are “beautiful gardens” that evoke the landscape of eighteenth century England (178), but from Lesley Winter’s standpoint, the gardens are no more than “the high point of agrarian bourgeois art” in Williams’ words. When Connie visits Lesley Winter, he says, “[. . .] I would open a mine on the lawns, and think it first-rate landscape gardening. Of, I am quite willing to exchange roe-deer for colliers, at the price” (179). The utterance of Lesley Winter might be construed in terms of Lawrence’s apprehension of the penetration of money to every dimension and every act, including gardening. For the estate owner, the ornamentation of gardens and the construction of mines demand the same principle, exploitation, which gives rise to “the beauty of money” and “the blessings of industrialism” (179).

The opposite landscapes and values are competing with one another throughout the novel, but at the end of this chapter, Lawrence renders the Wragby garden-flowers with a certain visibility that might be explained by Jacques Rancière’s key concept, the distribution of the sensible. This concept refers to the configuration of specific spaces

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<sup>64</sup> In his letter to Dr Trigant Burrow on 3 August 1927, Lawrence laments the lost Garden of Eden: “How to prevent suburbia spreading over Eden (too late! it’s already done) how to prevent Eden how to prevent running to a great wild wilderness” (*Selected Letters*, 357).

and time, of the visible and the invisible, and of noise and speech, tellingly, the mode of configuration that frames and reframes a sensory and material realm he calls the aesthetic regime.<sup>65</sup> More precisely, the distribution of the sensible is what “distributes spaces and times, subjects and objects, the common and the singular” by giving a new privilege to the insignificant sights, noises and events of ordinary life (*Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 25). The distribution of the sensible, therefore, connects a host of heterogeneous images, while inscribing a mode of “dissensus,” inherently egalitarian, according to Rancière.

Amplifying Rancière’s notion of the distribution of the sensible, Lawrence makes a sensorial space that displays the flowers planted at Clifford’s mansion. As suggested above, Lawrence juxtaposes two different landscapes in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* through the sequence of separate scenes: the end of chapter 11 and the very beginning of the next chapter. In chapter 11, Connie for the first time sympathizes with Mrs. Bolton whose husband was killed in a mining accident. To the upper class lady, Mrs. Bolton opens up about her bitterness towards the mining owners whom she holds responsible for her husband’s death, and then she talks about her memory of “the touch of him,” the source of tenderness that has stayed with her for the years since his death (186). Recalling the death of her husband, Mrs. Bolton weeps “a few bitter tears,” and listening

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<sup>65</sup> See Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Malden: Polity P, 2009). In his article “The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge,” published in 2009, Rancière clearly sums up the meaning of a distribution of the sensible. He makes three points. First, it means “a certain configuration of the given.” Second, “this configuration of the given entails a certain relation of sense and sense,” and “that may be conjunctive or disjunctive.” Third, “the conjunction or disjunction is also a matter of hierarchy” but the hierarchical relation can be disrupted by the redistribution of the sensible (2).

to her, Connie weeps “more” (186). The class hierarchy between Connie and Mrs. Bolton collapses at this moment; in accordance with their emotional bond, Lawrence alludes to the collapsed distinction between the wood-flowers and the English garden-flowers. “It was a warm spring day, with a perfume of earth and of yellow flowers, many things rising to bud, and the garden still with the very sap of sunshine,” says the narrator (186). No matter where the flowers are located, the garden-flowers are as lovely as the wild forest-flowers.

What Lawrence embodies here is “the co-presence of beings and objects constitutive of a world,” described by Rancière (*Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 57): the way to draw readers’ gaze both to the forest and the garden beyond discrimination. Lawrence invites the sense of equality that is brought in “when the distribution of the sensible is disrupted, and when a redistribution of the sensible is possible” (Highmore 96),<sup>66</sup> rather than simply privileging the beauty of wild flowers. Indeed, the descriptive passage quoted above exemplifies the mode of disinterestedness engaged in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* that has been notorious for the writer’s most opinionated and didactic novel. One might argue that disinterestedness was “anathema” to Lawrence because he sought to “apprehend the origins of human emotions and feelings” and he also created “powerful depictions, via language, of the aesthetic response that this apprehension gives rise to” (Saksena 6). Notwithstanding, the scenes of flowers avoid an intrusive narrator,

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<sup>66</sup> Ben Highmore, “Out of Place: Unprofessional Painting, Jacques Rancière and the Distribution of the Sensible.” *Reading Rancière*, edited by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011) p. 93-110.

and resurrect an impersonal point of view that seems fit for illuminating the universal beauty of flowers in every place.

To sum up, manifold attitudes toward beauty, if contradictory at times, converge at the moment of flower-flesh touch. On the one hand, Lawrence introduces a form of delicate and non-penetrating touch through the scene following the lovers' deepest physical contact—penetrating and somatic. After Lawrence embodied touching as penetrating by describing the sexual consummation of Connie and Mellors, he returns to skin level touch: the flowers and the kisses become reversible on the flesh. On the other, the touch of flowers on the human body contests the intrusion of technological machines in World War I and postwar period. The lovers' romantic performance with the forget-me-nots creates a way "not-to-forget" the natural beauty of the forest. But as the forest neighbors Wragby Hall, Lawrence recognized that the forest couldn't be a utopian space anymore in postwar England. The lovers' flower-flesh-touch can be deemed as an act for commemorating the beauty of flowers, but the life-affirming power of the flowers exceeds the human effort to preserve it. The destroyed flowers start their new life independent of the human gaze and touch. The beauty of the flowers can be detected not only in the wood but also in the Wragby garden, as the same sunshine enters both places.

### **Bomb for Tenderness**

To draw a final interpretive circle, let us consider the contradiction in Lawrence's imagination of tender beauty. After finishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence thought of calling the book "Tenderness" (Worthen 1979; 354). But while writing the

novel, he told a publisher, Harold Mason, it would be “a kind of bomb” for the readers (Worthen 1979; 179). Although “tenderness” and “bomb” seem contradictory, from Lawrence’s standpoint, tenderness and bomb should go inevitably hand in hand. By the time Lawrence told the publisher his plan of writing the “bomb-novel,” he anticipated that the novel would shock readers to awaken their numbed feeling. While sophisticating the imagination of tenderness, Lawrence also proposed that the novel bomb the readers so as to hurt them. Regardless of the ostensible incompatibility between bombing and tenderness, for Lawrence, bombing is essential to restore the lost tenderness out of the stuffiness, a symptom of cultural corruption. As explained in his response to Cézanne’s paintings of apples, Lawrence regards a feeling of pain as inevitable for the self-contented English spectators whose imagination is restricted to the mental-visual perception.

Lawrence’s notion of bombing comes from his desire to terrify the culture of touch-avoidance, in which both artists and spectators seek a safe distance from external things, disembody them, and pursue a shallow emotional consolation within an egoistic shell. Keeping this idea in his mind, in 1923 Lawrence wrote an essay titled “Surgery for the Novel—Or a Bomb.” With a rallying cry, Lawrence condemns the “childish” tendency of seeking narcissistic pleasure through the work of art within a tight wall:

Supposing a bomb were put under the whole scheme of things, what would we would be after? What feelings do we want to carry through into the next epoch? What feelings will carry us through? What is the underlying impulse in us that will provide the motive power for a new

state of things, when this democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey darling-take-me-to-mamma state of things is bust? (*Phoenix*, 519-20)

Using the prophetic tone that sounds didactic, Lawrence claims for the necessity of a bomb that would hurt the hyper-verbal-visual mind of his contemporary writers and readers.<sup>67</sup> In this essay, Lawrence diagnoses literary devices such as stream of consciousness used by Joyce and Proust as a symptom of the writers' childish egotism. Lawrence deemed that a bomb would make the only solution to renew the corruption of modern fiction: the new kind of novel should be capable of collapsing the cozy wall thickened by Joyce, Proust and other writers, enabling the readers to grow up. The readers must avoid the cozy wall by reading a "serious" novel (of course, Lawrence's own novel), so Lawrence was willing to take the "bomb-project" as a prophetic-surgeon writer. Lawrence desired to surprise the people by means of his novel, a cultural bomb, which is shocking but "a beneficial one, very necessary" (Worthen 1979; 179). In this context, Lawrence says in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*: "in spite of all antagonism, I put forth this novel as an honest, healthy book, necessary for us today" (9). For Lawrence, an honest writer is responsible for undertaking a bomb-project to "kill off the reader's deadening and moribund attitudes" (Burack 492).

Lawrence's self-imposed mission is like a call to the surgeon curing a patient's disease by undertaking an operation. In the way that a surgeon cutting off the cause of disease issues from the patient's body, Lawrence requires a surgery for the spreading

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<sup>67</sup> A passage in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* reverberates the same idea: "[she] would have to go back to Wragby and its walls, and now she hated it, especially its thick walls. Walls! Always walls! Yet one needed them in this wind" (95).

disease, the fear of body and touch, which seems as a postwar symptom spreading through the nation. For reviving the pleasure in beauty—felt by the touch of tenderness, Lawrence intended to make a bomb-novel that may shock his readers. Lawrence thus did not hesitate to use violent language in declaring his ideas. For example, he wrote a letter to Carlo Linati just prior to finishing *The Plumed Serpent*: “A book should be either a bandit or a rebel or a man in a crowd. . . . An author should be in among the crowd, kicking their shins or cheering on to some mischief or merriment. . . . whoever reads me will be in the thick of the scrimmage, and if he doesn’t like it—if he wants a safe seat in the audience—let him read somebody else” (Worthen 1979; 156).

Lawrence’s rhetorical toughness could be deemed as a result of his repressed anger, about the source of which many critics have been curious. Many scholars argue that Lawrence’s marginalized social position built a terrible feeling of resentment in him. Calling Lawrence “an outsider” isolated from the literary and intellectual “insiders,” for example, John Worthen traces the surrounding circumstances that might affect Lawrence’s bitterness in a biographical book *D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider* (2005). Lawrence “never became the writer of acknowledged reputation which his early books had suggested he might be; he maintained a public, but a relatively small one” (xxi), says Worthen. What he also highlights is that Lawrence was on the receiving end of patronizing attitudes from upper class writers and artists in the 1920s; the accumulated sense of exclusion might leave devastating mental impacts on Lawrence, a naturally sensitive person. To defend Lawrence’s explosion of anger, the biographer

elaborates his personal experiences that made him feel unwanted from the artistic milieu, the publishers, and the readers.<sup>68</sup>

Yet, although the psychological approach to Lawrence illuminates one hidden aspect of Lawrence's fiction, it results in disregarding the writer's own desire to reduce self-exposure to textual spaces. As an admirer of Cézanne's impersonal paintings, Lawrence had some fear of losing self-control over his anger in writing fictions. Lawrence's several essays reflect his desire for impersonality and disinterestedness. In *Studies in Classic American Literature* Lawrence distinguishes the role of a fiction-writer (an artist) from a critic: "[it] is the critic's task to 'save the tale from the artist who created it' (2). The 1925 essay 'Morality and the Novel' records Lawrence's desire to escape from the toughness: says he, if 'the novelist puts his thumbs in the pan, for love, tenderness, sweetness, peace,' the novel might fail to represent 'the trembling and oscillating of the balance' (*Phoenix*, 173).

Lawrence adored the beauty of an impersonal work of art such as Cézanne's apples independent from the artist's self-projection. But as "the text itself is always already interested" (Pease 154), Lawrence's novel cannot be an impersonal work of art, after all. In his constant oscillation between the desire for disinterestedness and the intention of bombing, Lawrence's last novel embraces double impulses. Moreover, Lawrence's effort to go beyond words in representing the ineffable beauty "makes him more wordy than ever" in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Pease 155). It is also not clear

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<sup>68</sup> Apparently, Worthen's assumption of Lawrence's anger tends to collapse the writer's self-claim for the bombing project. Worthen finds the root of Lawrence's anger from his personal troubles, whereas Lawrence justified his explosion by taking the redemptive role.



whether the novel has played as a “bomb” for the readers in a way that “touches” the inside of their body. What remains the most remarkable in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is the mark of his “struggle”—the quality he attributed to Cézanne—to apprehend things in themselves, and to shape their “atopos” in the surface of the text.

CHAPTER III  
CATCHING BEAUTY IN THE CROWD:  
EMBODIED PERSONS IN FICTIONS BY MURIEL SPARK

**Becoming a Postwar Aesthete**

The last half of the twentieth century saw the rise of literary criticism that stresses modernist literature's tendency to idealize the homogenous ephemeral moment where a gazer (typically male) deploys an object of beauty for his private pleasure. The subsequent postwar anti-aesthetic sentiment, coinciding with Theodor Adorno's 1949 declaration—"to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (34)—influenced a wide range of British writers from the Movement poets to the Angry Young Men by encouraging them to renounce the interest in beauty central to the modernist aesthetic in the earlier period.<sup>69</sup> For example, advocating a return to realism, Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, and others turned away from the discourse on beauty as part of an attempt to register political radicalism in literary works. Like Evelyn Waugh, positing himself as what David Lodge first called, an anti-modernist, these writers shared an anti-modernist standpoint in their skepticism over the high modernist aesthetics predominant in the works of Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce, Kafka, and Mann. On the other hand, what Lodge and others since have called postmodernist writers, such as Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, and John Barth, continued the modernist critique of traditional realism, and further experimented with literary techniques in ways that subvert conventional modes

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<sup>69</sup> Adorno's 1949 statement is quoted from Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1983).

of writing in accordance with a dramatically changed social and intellectual situation after World War II.<sup>70</sup>

In the postwar context of the 1950s and 1960s, Muriel Spark occupied a unique position in her search for beauty through the imaginary space of literature, moving beyond the formalist distinction between experimental modern/postmodern and political anti-modernist fiction that has dominated critics' accounts of the mid-century literary terrain, and bringing an aesthetic embodiment of beauty in her 1960s fiction.<sup>71</sup> In fact, as Spark defined herself as a "poet novelist" and paid her artistic debt to such modernist predecessors as Marcel Proust, her texts' emphasis is on style and lyrical sentiment that is central to the works of the romantic poets like William Wordsworth as well as to lyrical modernists.<sup>72</sup> In fact, Spark openly proclaimed her inclination to poetry and stressed a writer's individual spirit: in her 1971 essay "My Conversion," she declares, "I

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<sup>70</sup> David Lodge referred to the two kinds of responses to modernism as anti-modernism and postmodernism for the first time. For works examining the literary movements from modernism to anti-modernism and postmodernism after World War II, see Malcolm Bradbury's *The Modern British Novel*. Bradbury's collection *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, and Andrzej Gasiorek's *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After*, effectively introduce the period, and undertake the aesthetic and political debates we will be dealing with, as does *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century*, eds. Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge (2007).

<sup>71</sup> Despite several critics' attempts to aptly categorize Spark as either an anti-modernist or a postmodernist writer based on their more or less arbitrary understanding of what "anti" or "post" modern means, Spark belongs to neither of these fixed concepts. See David Herman's introduction to *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First Century Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2010), a collection of essays on Spark's works, published in part to commemorate Spark's death on 13 April 2006. In *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Marina MacKay and Lyndsey Stonebridge argue that labels such as "realist" and "experimental" have failed to do justice to the transitional nature of the mid-century novel.

<sup>72</sup> See Spark's essay, "My Conversion," in which she addresses Proust, Newman and Max Beerbohm as the writers who have influenced her to a great extent.

have also read an awful lot of poetry. I'm not very well read in the novel. I like style very much" (27).<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in her autobiography, Spark proposes that "the novel as an art form was essentially a variation of a poem. . . any good novel, or indeed any composition which called for a constructional sense, was essentially an extension of poetry" (*Curriculum Vitae*, 205). Regarding the interconnection between Spark's taste for poetry and her fiction, Alan Bold argues that Spark's achievement lies in her balanced synthesis of poetry and prose, while Vassiliki Kolocotroni demonstrates the poetic influences on the style of her novels in a recent article, "Poetic Perception in the Fiction of Muriel Spark" (2010). Emphasizing autonomy and individualism as the crux of an artist's spirit, Spark expresses her loyalty to a quiet aesthetic space throughout her essays and fiction, in which an artist figure attains and gives pleasure by virtue of securing a certain space of freedom, aloof from the disorder and the chaotic voices of the crowd.

It is not accidental that an artist figure's search for a private space emerges as a common theme in her fictions, ranging from her first novel, *The Comforters*, published in 1957, to her 1981 novel, *Loitering with Intent*. These works prove the significance of personal arenas in protecting one's private pleasure and sense of autonomy from the intruding powers of society. Spark's turn to lyrical poetry and individualism tends to associate her with aesthetes like many other modernists eager to pursue "one's own room," an aesthetic space isolated from expanding public crowds. Indeed, Spark's

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<sup>73</sup> Spark began her career as a published poet, an editor of the *Poetry Review*, and a co-editor of a biography on Wordsworth, *Tribute to Wordsworth: A Miscellany of Opinion for the Centenary of the Poet's Death* (1950).

novels display the joy of inventing a fictional space, deemed to be identical with a closed artifact in Marxist literary studies elaborated by Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson since the 1980s.<sup>74</sup> Sure enough, Spark wished to remain an imaginative artist whose major purpose is to “give pleasure” through the textual medium. She therefore identifies “pleasure” as the key role of literature in “The Desegregation of Art” (1971) at a time when literature for many writers refers to a medium conveying political messages. In spite of the postwar bitterness toward attempts to reinforce the aesthetic notions of pleasure, beauty, and art for art’s sake, Spark did not renounced the value of pleasure in reading literature.

However, although Spark cherished an artist’s private realm, modeling herself on high modernists like Proust in experimenting with artistic style and form, and engaging deeply with literary modernism, she still innovated new forms of expression in writing fiction, rather than simply adopting the aesthetic strategies of her literary ancestors.<sup>75</sup> As I shall demonstrate later, for example, Spark’s fictions modify, radicalize and twist moments of beauty—epiphanies—inscribed in the works of earlier modernist writers intending to capture the sudden revelation of beauty. Spark’s

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<sup>74</sup> See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As a Socially Symbolic Act*, and Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. The Marxist approach to the aesthetic artifact will be discussed in more detail in relation with Spark’s 1963 novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

<sup>75</sup> One might argue, then, that Spark is “an amphibious figure” in the mid twentieth century, affirming the claim of Mackay and Stonebridge. Their *British Fiction After Modernism* (2007) suggests that Spark’s novels encompass features presented both by anti-modernists reacting against modernism and by postmodernist practitioners, which makes her appear as an “an amphibious figure”; similarly, David Herman states that Spark “in effect opted out of the two responses to modernism” in ways that combine “a self-reflexive focus on novelist technique, including modes of metafictional play, with a probing investigation of the moral, psychological, and intuitional dimensions of human conduct” (1).

attraction to this convention in turn suggests that she desired to challenge fixed ideas on beauty numerous writers and artists had shared especially since the late eighteenth century, when the concepts of transcendence, the sublime, and beauty were tightly joined and modern European aesthetic philosophy privileged the spiritual over the physical, which begot abstract images of bodies in the fields of art and literature.<sup>76</sup>

The task of encapsulating moments of beauty remains Spark's project in writing fiction during the postwar era, but instead of collaborating in the aestheticization of everyday experience the critic Walter Benjamin points to in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), Spark makes it clear that the artificial beautification of things and human beings fundamentally differs from the discovery of beauty in each individual and object. Spark's self-conscious distinction between "beautification" and "beauty" enabled her to avoid beautifying the ubiquitous horror in the world. In "The Desegregation of Art," while highlighting the pleasure of art, Spark also proposes that "the art and literature of sentiment and emotion" should disappear, no matter how beautiful a representation they show, and she argues that the making of a sentimental work should be renounced because it seemed a "segregated activity," distancing spectators from social and political reality (35). Spark's works resist both the romantic impulse to embellish the disturbing aspects of reality and artists' self-alienation from society, while constantly endeavoring to represent a quiet space from which the spirit of an individual artist becomes expressed.

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<sup>76</sup> For a critical survey investigating the concepts of the modern aesthetic from the eighteenth century thinkers such as Kant and Schiller to the contemporary philosophers, including Adorno, Habermas, and others, see Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

The dialectical interplay between Spark's fondness for private spaces and her feeling of communal responsibility renders in her fictions a dialogic space that embraces multiple modes in the course of searching for a specific beauty that a novelist would be privileged to embody. In fictions ranging from *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958), and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), to her 1980s works such as *Loitering with Intent* (1981) and *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988), Spark self-reflexively portrays a novelist-figure who strives to resolve the dialectical tension between seeking autonomy and responding to the urgency for engagement with sociohistorical circumstances.<sup>77</sup>

These twin concerns, the author's desire for narrative form and the need to involve historical contingencies, run through Spark's oeuvre without a clear resolution. Yet, what seems truly important for Spark is not to willfully compromise the tension between the contradictory modes of realities but to humbly accept the difficulty of reaching complete harmony even in a fictional narrative, regarded as a microcosmic world and a complete structure by literary formalists.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> In Spark's fictions, an artist's desire for independence is often presented as an act of constructing a narrative, which she represents as an aesthetic world in which a storyteller gains a self-seeking pleasure, and, by extension, affords pleasure to a reader.

<sup>78</sup> Malcolm Bradbury and Frank Kermode approach Spark's novels from the formalist standpoint. Both of them propose the organic narrative form as the most remarkable strength of Spark's fiction. See Bradbury's seminal essay "Muriel Spark's Fingernails," *Critical Quarterly* 14 (1972): 241-50, which is also a chapter of *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (London: Oxford UP, 1973); Kermode, "The Novel as Jerusalem: Muriel Spark's *Mandelbaum Gate*," *Atlantic* 216 (1965): 92-98. In a sense, Spark's acceptance of the inaccessibility to the organic unity tends to evoke György Lukács's assumption of the lost totality, a sort of the Utopian world in which two contrasting experiences, the private and the public, or the subject and the object, correspond one another, thereby approaching an organic integration between separate elements. See Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, first published in 1920 (Massachusetts: MIT P, 1971). Here Lukács asserts that "once this unity disintegrated, there could be no more spontaneous totality of being," and "an attempt to forget that art is only one sphere among many,

The complexity of harmonizing the private and the public frustrated Romantic and modernist writers who oscillated between heterogeneous interests: one desire for staying alone and the other desire for getting some fresh air in urban crowds. On the one hand, in the early nineteenth century, the expanded crowds in English cities served to reconfigure the landscape of London streets and produced a new mode of social life by offering fresh ways to structure public space. As Gustave Le Bon describes the collective power of the crowd, usually deemed to be unconscious, in his 1898 book *The Crowd*, the presence of urban crowds supplied the sense of excitement and positive possibilities for mobilization and flexibility to the social structures in response to the era's democratic aspirations.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, such crowds, which came to embody social chaos, provided literary writers with a new sort of concern because they found crowds to be a potential force threatening their right to stay solitary, which J. W. Goethe calls an artist's "advantage of loneliness" (Plotz 18).

This ambivalent nature of the crowd served to foster "a paradoxical distance" between crowd and writer, as John Plotz suggests in *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* (2000). Specifically, encountering overwhelming crowds in London by the early nineteenth century, writers found both the sense of liberation and horror. In this situation, some of the writers adopted a convenient way to evade the horror the crowds brought to their mind. This alleviation of the horror was partly fulfilled through

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and that the very disintegration and inadequacy of the world is the precondition for the existence of art and its becoming conscious. This exaggeration of the substantiality of art is bound to weigh too heavily upon its forms" (38).

<sup>79</sup> See Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New Brunswick: Transaction P, 1995), first published in 1895.



writing literary texts in which the presence of the crowd plays as “a backdrop against which one can do things that one could not have done outside it,” and therefore, the crowd was deemed to be nothing but a “useful” and “even delightful” spectacle to “any self-contained individual” (Plotz 19). Plotz points to William Wordsworth’s aesthetic strategy for mitigating the horror of the crowd, for instance. To some extent, Wordsworth admired the presence of the city crowd, but he was also wary of the people in London because “a glimpse of London with its crowds” appeared to “shatter the aesthetic spell” he had always pursued as a poet (Plotz 38). Desiring to assuage this kind of anxiety, Wordsworth “aestheticized” the crowd in *Prelude* in ways that establish a space of the crowd in sharp opposition to a private realm—the poet’s ultimate destination for aesthetic pleasure. According to Plotz, Wordsworth’s juxtaposition between these contrasting spaces originated from his intention to heighten the representation of the pleasure of being alone, if paradoxical, provided that “there would be no aesthetic pleasure without the threatening world of the nonaesthetic—both as a continual presence outside the poem, and as an imprecisely controlled incursion into the poem” (Plotz 38).

If Wordsworth appropriated the crowd as a literary backdrop since finding its presence to be useful for distinguishing the opposite terrain, the solitary space he truly yearned for, early twentieth century modernist writers, who stood in uneasy relation to the “insensitive” crowds, tried to resolve the conflict between the private and the public by seeking to create a magical moment, an enclosed site to which an artist can momentarily escape from the external world. As Franco Moretti argues in *The Way of*

*the World* (2000), the sweeping war trauma after World War I disrupted “the unity of Ego,” producing “a regressive semiotic anxiety,” and consequently, the post-war modernist writers, who could not compromise the tension between the romantic self and the indifferent Other, strove to end the struggle through inventing “useful and sweet” moments in the realm of literature (Moretti 244).<sup>80</sup> The static moments served to satisfy the modernists’ quest for aesthetic pleasure, recovering their broken self to some extent. Accordingly, in the works of literary modernism, the tension between the private and public seems to be eroded, and the struggles for reconciliation are abruptly resigned.

However, as I earlier mentioned, Spark sustained the tension between the private and the public, which otherwise might collapse because each of the realms tends to invite conflicting interests and desires. In her 1960s fictions recollecting the 1930s and 40s, Spark revisits these overarching desires in seeking ways to embody the moment of beauty in narratives that would raise both aesthetic pleasures and ethical reactions so that the image of beauty can not only privilege one’s private space but also challenge the reckless beautification that was perpetuated under the Nazis and Fascists who put political life on display and collapsed the distinction between reality and fiction. To create the unique embodiment of beauty while refusing the tendency to beautify experiences that paralyze the viewer’s critical thinking and judgment, Spark resists some of the assumptions and attitudes adopted by her literary predecessors. Above all, while romantic and the modernist writers found it extremely difficult to shatter their aspiration for resolving the oscillation between the private and the public, Spark accepts the

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<sup>80</sup> Moretti’s *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* was first published in 1987.

impossibility of accomplishing the perfect integration between these opposite arenas, which became her point of departure to engage the discourse of beauty.

In Spark's understanding, the public sphere of 1930s and 40s Britain is a site wherein dictators put politics on display while people became passive spectators, rather than taking an ethical role in "mocking" the political oppressors who attempted to deceive the crowd by utilizing aesthetic elements such as clothes, visual props, and highly controlled speeches. Recognizing the situation where "the aesthetic is largely reducible to ideology, a form of political dominance" (Harkin 185), Spark neither escapes from the "nonaesthetic" public arena nor simply unmasks the falsity of an aesthetic cloister, the space in which the artist embraces art for art's sake, whereas her contemporary writers and critics, however, tended to privilege either the private or public alternative. Spark concluded that an artist challenges pervasive aestheticization by focusing on an individual person out of the crowd, no matter how dominant and insensitive the political actors and the spectators might be. Illuminating certain kind of qualities inhering in a person whose beauty is unseen to the passive spectators, Spark asks whether individual uniqueness can outlast the spectacle of the crowd.

Moreover, Spark's embodiment of beauty assumes that the beauty of a person springs from a passion toward life, which situates her in a meaningful contrast to high modernist predecessors for whom beauty is often associated with the image of death. The consequence is that in Spark's fiction an embodied beauty celebrates the corporeal energy of a person; for example, while a beautiful human figure tends to lose her bodily characteristics within the play of the gazer's memory in the novels of Proust and Joyce,

among others, embodied beauty in Spark's novels accompanies a vivid, persistent and corporeal image. This feature proves the writer's radical alteration of the qualities of modernist epiphanies, and her desire to subvert the hierarchy between the desiring subject and the desired object; consequently, Spark's embodiment of beauty disturbs the perceiver's existing frame of thoughts and sentiments.

Spark confronts these issues—the discovery of beauty and the contrasting notion, beautification—most obviously in her early novels *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963). In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, her most popular novel, Spark calls into question Miss Brodie's pursuit of beauty, assuming that the protagonist's desire for beauty and goodness is basically rooted in the aesthete's contempt for utilitarian culture and materialism. Despite Brodie's desire to be a true individual, adopting the notion of art for art's sake, her beauty project turns into a dangerous beautification, analogous to fascist aestheticization in many aspects. *The Girls of Slender Means*, published two years after *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, translates the terror of Brodie's beautification into a confined space, a female hostel, set during World War II period. In this fiction, Spark includes an evolved vision of beauty, capturing a corporeal image of a person singled out of the “non-aesthetic” crowd: the character emerges as a fresh icon of beauty thanks to the writer's attention, stressed by Spark as the important quality for a reader to cultivate to obtain the sense of pleasure and to resist the confusion between fiction and reality. Central to Spark's embodiment of beauty is the distinction between willful beautification and beauty itself, which should be discovered through attention and sympathy.

This chapter argues that Spark orients her vision of beauty toward a passion for life that exceeds the frame of stage, a narrative, or any other containment, while, at the same time, her vision seeks an aesthetic space, a fictional realm. In keeping with this argument, this chapter begins by exploring how Spark approaches Brodie's desire for perfection that results in suppressing individual autonomy, even though the character most values the sense of independence in seeking beauty. Associating Brodie's exaltation of an unchanging and transcendent ideal of beauty with the heritage of European aestheticism, romanticism, and modernism, Spark portrays how Brodie's attraction to beauty merges with that of fascist aesthetics in the 1930s. Subsequently, to illuminate the culmination of embodied beauty in *Girls*, the next section will pay attention to an image of a character in *Girls*, by which Spark modifies the standard notion of beauty that had been fossilized by the gaze of spectators and the system of utilitarian institutions. My discussion takes up an overarching literary trope—that of the window—as the focal point to propose that the process of framing has constructed the aesthetic ideal, which reproduces the standard of beauty.

### **Frozen Human Figures in Miss Brodie's Artwork**

Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

. . . . .

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

- John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820)

In Spark's novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Miss Jean Brodie, a self-consciously progressive teacher in the Marcia Blaine School for Girls in Edinburgh, forms a small group of her favorite six students, called "the Brodie set," in 1931, the year frequently referred to as the beginning of Brodie's "prime" throughout the narrative.<sup>81</sup> Although other feminist women of Edinburgh might eschew taking a teaching position within such a conformist school, Brodie, even while talking "to men as man-to-man" (44), believes that she has a special mission for her students. Brodie's self-imposed mission is to free the girls from the hideous philistine culture that threatens the spirit of art, beauty, and individualism. As Brodie says to the art master Teddy Lloyd, "It is obvious [ . . . ] that these girls are not of cultured home and heritage. The Philistines are upon us, Mr. Lloyd" (51). Brodie sees that expanding philistinism has toppled the passion for beauty and goodness. Taking the role of "a leaven in the lump" (6), Brodie tries to turn her pupils away from utilitarianism and to nurture rebellion against Philistine dominance.

This is why Brodie privileges art and religion in her classroom; she preaches to her students, "Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow Me" (7). Brodie, whose slogan is reminiscent of the concluding phrase of Keats's poem, concentrates on teaching art and religion over any other subjects, even though more and more Edinburgh students prefer to take so-called modern courses such as science and physical education. While Brodie pretends to advocate both "Modern"

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<sup>81</sup> Hereafter citations of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *The Girls of Slender Means* will be marked parenthetically as *Prime* and *Girls*.

and “Classical” education, her pupils know about Brodie’s inner “contempt for the Modern side” (64). Departing from the authority of the official curriculum, Brodie designs her own pedagogical programs to cultivate the girls’ taste for beauty, love, and religion, despite the headmistress Miss Mackay’s hostility to her teaching methods.

The six girls—Sandy, Jenny, Eunice, Monica, Rose, Mary—feel proud of belonging to the Brodie set because their leader has always been “a figure of glamorous activity even in the eyes of the non-Brodie girls” (119). The set has the exquisite pleasure of following the “dangerous Miss Brodie” and absorbing her lessons, which are irrelevant to the authorized curriculum. For example, after school the students take part in a dramatic scene where Brodie is reciting romantic poems such as Alfred Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott,” keeping her eyes “half shut” and her head “thrown back” as if she were performing the tragic lady in the poem (20). In addition to their everyday training, the girls go to the theater and art galleries at the age of ten under their teacher’s guidance, while other Marcia Blaine girls of the same age cannot think of experiencing such an “adult” world. From time to time the Brodie pupils are taken to her flat to have tea; as the members of the Brodie set, these girls have been privileged to hear about their glamorous teacher’s past love affairs and even the ongoing tension in her relation with the headmistress.

Separate from the official curriculum, Brodie’s education aims to oppose the “team spirit” and to approximate an independent and elegant individual, regardless of her socioeconomic status. According to Brodie, talented artists such as Sybil Thorndike, a British actress known for taking unconventional roles for women, and Anna Pavlova,

an outstanding Russian ballet dancer, are the best examples of a femininity that transcends mediocre conformity so as to accomplish woman's mission in the early twentieth century. Along with Thorndike and Pavlova, Brodie also refers to Florence Nightingale, Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, and the Queen of England to claim that an individual's resistance to "the team spirit" is the primary source of beauty and goodness that "[saves] life regardless of the team" to which she belonged (83).<sup>82</sup>

Historically speaking, Brodie's identification of beauty with individual spirit might come from the culture of European aestheticism, in which decadent artists, "confronted with the oppressiveness of the industrial world," took beauty as "a primary value to be realized at all costs, to such a point that life itself ought to be lived as a work of art" (Eco 2004; 329-330). To be precise, corresponding to the sweeping surge of technology-based civilization in the second half of the nineteenth century—years witnessing scientific and technological progress, industrial revolution, and socioeconomic changes spurred by capitalism—radical aesthetes such as Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Gustave Flaubert adopted "art for art's sake" as their primary motto with an aim of protecting beauty, art, and individualism against modern bourgeois ideologies stemming from vulgar utilitarianism (Calinescu 41). Matei Calinescu, who explains the clash between two distinct modernities in *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987), has proposed the term "aesthetic modernity" to characterize a cluster

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<sup>82</sup> Here is Brodie's contradiction. Brodie emphasizes individualism beyond class and gender boundaries, but the women she refers to are all highborn, and some of them are notorious for their physical attractiveness. Brodie's models are professional and independent women who can travel alone in the early twentieth century, but at the same time, they are super-feminine in appearance and manners.



of cultural movements toward art for art's sake, opposing a paradigm of bourgeois modernity oriented toward pragmatism. In this way, aesthetic movements originally served as a powerful alternative to materialistic culture after the emergence of mass society in the later nineteenth century.

In *Prime*, Brodie's objection to "the team spirit" is aligned with the aestheticians' rebellion against philistine culture. If the followers of aestheticism pursued art and beauty in a way that identified them as different from the commonplace majority, Brodie protests orthodox teaching methods by giving her pupils aesthetic lessons. The Marcia Blaine School thus stands as a small-scale space epitomizing the condition of European modernization, where two different worldviews are competing against each other. For instance, Miss Lockhart's science room contrasts with Brodie's aesthetic lessons, and the juxtaposition of two types of education becomes a crucial device that signifies the historical clash between aesthetic and scientific modernity. Brodie's aesthetic education serves as a way of instilling passion and noble ambition in her pupils. Fascinated by the exceptional women "reaching life's elite" or by the "crème de la crème" (22), Brodie encourages the girls to go beyond social boundaries, though such a path risks engendering existential loneliness.

At first sight, Brodie's radical emphasis on beauty and art appears harmless, except that her different way of teaching annoys the authoritarian headmistress, Miss Mackay, who watches for an opportunity to dissolve the Brodie set and thus to restore the school's unity. However, despite Brodie's desire to resist the spreading "vulgarity" in Edinburgh where the pragmatic method of teaching has been predominant, her

passionate approach to truth, goodness and beauty arise from some intrinsic and historical problems affecting her students and her own fate, while she endeavors to keep a “good” will to work through such romantic concepts in reality. Many critical studies on this book tend to question the motivation of Brodie’s totalitarian mastery over the students. Many scholars such as Martin McQuillan, Judy Suh and others find the root of Brodie’s exertion of power in her predilection for authority, reading her as a political allegory of Nazi or fascist dictators, while David Lodge, Ann Ashworth, Paddy Lyons, Isobel Murray and Bob Tait among others highlight Brodie’s silliness, naïveté or dramatic temperament as what makes her an “unconscious” control freak.<sup>83</sup> I intend neither to support the extensively repeated claim that Brodie becomes a totalitarian figure by taking on literally and metaphorically the identity of dictators, nor to reemphasize Brodie’s “silliness”—undeniably an appropriate term for a character completely blind to the dangers her romantic endeavors might trigger.

It is evident that Brodie goes astray in her adoration of Mussolini’s Fascism and Hitler’s Nazism, but at the heart of her allegiance to such politics is her yearning for the end of unemployment, rather than the deep-seated desire toward power. Brodie sympathizes with Mussolini because she expects him to “put an end to unemployment with his fascisti” (31), and when realizing his inability to improve the problem, she aptly

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<sup>83</sup> This point will be made in more detail later in this chapter. It seems worth introducing Paddy Lyons’s reading of Miss Brodie. Lyons proves how one’s “artistic” temperament might entail the desire for complete manipulation. In “Muriel Spark’s Break with Romanticism” (2010), he argues: “Jean Brodie is purely dramatic, a performance artist, with the immediacy and the fragility which that entails, presenting herself as she invents herself, her girls becoming the crème de la crème. . . She is constructed on an entirely theatrical basis, and from this has followed her rich appeal for actresses, on stage and on screen” (90). Here Lyons assumes that Brodie internalizes the romantic artist’s desire for organic wholeness and in *Prime*, Spark breaks apart from the drive toward complete manipulation in creating a work of art.

shifts her loyalty from Mussolini to Hitler, addressing him as “a prophet-figure like Thomas Carlyle, and more reliable than Mussolini” (103). Brodie stops admiring Hitler when she discovers the still unsolved social issue of unemployment in Germany and Austria, while touring the countries in the late 1930s. After returning from her trips, early in September 1938, Brodie tells Sandy “Hitler was rather naughty” (131), but as the narrator remarks, “at this time she was full of her travels and quite sure the new regime would save the world” (131). The repeated disappointment with these political regimes never defeats Brodie’s wish for the better future: she keeps searching for a new political savior, altruistic as well as capable of ending the problems calling suffering. Brodie’s political partisanship stems from her romantic anticipation of a beautiful new order replacing the formless chaos, and therefore, such a yearning would be like that of a religious believer who expects a savior to redeem human depravity.

In Brodie’s view, religion and politics are by no means at odds. It is not paradoxical for Brodie, who is waiting for the social revolution, to advise her students to pray for a group of the unemployed gathered on the street. When Monica Douglas whispers, “They are Idle,” and Sandy looks horrified by the spectacle of the crowds, Brodie corrects their misconception of the people: “In England they are called the Unemployed. They are waiting to get their dole from the labour bureau . . . You must all pray for the Unemployed, I will write you out the special prayer for them . . . They are our brothers. Sandy, stop staring at once. In Italy the Unemployment problem has been solved” (39-40).

Brodie's religious approach to politics in effect echoes Benito Mussolini's doctrine on fascism, in which Mussolini asserts, "[the] Fascists conception of life is a religious one, in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society" (*The Doctrine of Fascism*, 9). In reality, the fascists "elevated Mussolini to a quasi-divine state," using a Catholic prayer of faith in God for expressing their belief in Mussolini (Falasca-Zamponi 64). The passage of the prayer is adapted for Mussolini during the early years of the fascist regime: "I believe in the high Duce—maker of the Black Shirts" (qtd. in Falasca-Zamponi, 64); furthermore, taking the role of a God-like super hero, Mussolini presented himself as the image of immortality as if his body were immune from death by detaching himself "from earthly matters" (Falasca-Zamponi 74). Mussolini, after all, became "more sacred than fascism itself" (Falasca-Zamponi 77).

However, despite several affinities between Brodie and Mussolini, whose leadership presents the aesthetic disposition based on attractive styles and affirms the aspiration for the savior of a corrupt world, it seems exaggerated to claim that Brodie personifies the fascistic dictator because she turns out as one of the deceived spectators to celebrate the fascist's spectacle utilizing "the remnants of auratic symbols and their mystical authority both to keep the 'masses' from pursuing their own interests and to give them a means to express themselves" (Falasca-Zamponi 9).<sup>84</sup> While the

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<sup>84</sup> See p. 9 in Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997). Here Falasca-Zamponi elaborates on

propagandistic myth-making of Mussolini aimed at persuading “the people to embrace the fascist cause” and reflects his own wish for fame and power (Falasca-Zamponi 56), Brodie’s yearning for the beautiful new world, demanding a superior leader, has to do with her concern about the issue of unemployment, which mirrors her deep seated anxiety about her precarious social status as a middle class single woman, working at a conservative Edinburgh school where the headmistress and most of other faculty have rejected her. Moreover, even in the self-governing Brodie set, often compared to the small-scale Fascist Party, Brodie confronts her favorite student’s betrayal, although Mussolini succeeded in hoodwinking the people with manipulative tactics, and influenced German Nazism by offering “a model for Hitler’s own elaboration of political style” (Falasca-Zamponi 8). In fact, Sandy’s betrayal has an enormous impact on Brodie, the dismissal from her teaching position that seems to cause her sudden death.

Those who focus on Brodie’s silliness tend to regard her naivety as the seed of all “bad” behaviors, and as a consequence, rarely link her silliness with any positive quality that endows the character with a certain kind of loveliness. However, Spark affectionately remembered Christina Kay, the teacher in her schooldays who would become the model for Brodie, in her autobiography *Curriculum Vitae*.<sup>85</sup> Despite

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Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the loss of aura, proposed in his 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

<sup>85</sup> See Spark’s *Curriculum Vitae: A Volume of Autobiography* (New York: New Directions, 1999). A lot of parts of the autobiography sketch Christina Kay’s character, pedagogy, and tastes in art, color and etc.. Spark includes fun episodes about her schooldays with “Miss Kay”. For example, Spark says, “When I first saw the film of The Prime of my immediate reaction was that it was too brightly coloured for a true depiction of the Edinburgh scene. So, indeed, it was. But I think Miss Kay would have felt very happy about the imposed bright colours. She loved colours. She taught us to be aware of them. She could never accept drab raincoats”. . . “What

Brodie's "exposure of the autocratic" behaviors, *Prime* implies that Spark is often on Brodie's side, as John Updike observes (211). For example, Sandy, who betrays Brodie, later confesses that "[it]'s only possible to betray where loyalty is due" after she became a nun (136), and she realizes that there is a certain kind of beauty in Brodie's weakness, essential to make her a "human" figure, no matter how many flaws it involves. In Sandy's view, Brodie's silliness is at times deemed a source of loveliness that triggers a tender sympathy for a fragile human creature:

Sandy felt warmly towards Miss Brodie at those times when she saw how she was misled in her idea of Rose. It was then that Miss Brodie looked beautiful and fragile, just as dark heavy Edinburgh itself could suddenly be changed into a floating city when the light was a special pearly white and fell upon the gracefully fashioned streets. In the same way Miss Brodie's masterful features became clear and sweet to Sandy when viewed in the curious light of the woman's folly, and she never felt more affection for her in her later years than when she thought upon Miss Brodie as silly. (118)

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filled our minds with wonder and made Christina Kay so memorable was the personal drama and poetry within which everything in her classroom happened. Her large, dark eyes were always alert and shining—that, I think, was half of the magic" (53); "Miss Kay always had the knack of gaining our entire sympathy, whatever her views" (60); "I was now eleven years old, discovering the delights of poetry and art through that wonderful teacher Christina Kay. My schooldays were now extremely exciting, and some of my new awareness of life's possibilities entered my parallel home life. Just as Miss Kay and her colleagues were forming the basis of the future characters in my novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. . ." (84-85); "Frances Niven and I had a farewell tea with Miss Christina Kay. Frances, too, was soon to get married. I felt that Miss Kay was looking at me sometimes with a strange sadness. I felt she wished I were not going. I never saw her again" (111).

Juxtaposed with “dark heavy Edinburgh,” Brodie remains strangely anachronistic due to her romantic approach to politics, while absorbing progressive ideas at many points. Brodie’s “masterful features” gain a new light in Sandy’s mind when these qualities are conflated with silliness, not a peculiar temperament in *her* but a common vulnerability in human character. Gerard Carruthers brings up this point in “Muriel Spark as Catholic Novelist,” an essay in the recently published collection, *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (2010), which provides a series of critical perspectives on Spark’s fiction, while engaging in productive debate with previous Spark criticism, *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction* (2001), edited by Martin McQuillan. Noting that McQuillan’s theory-based approach to Spark’s fiction reduces our understanding of her characters like Brodie, Carruthers elaborates on Sandy’s shifting view of Brodie’s silliness: “[It] is her newly dawning Catholic religion that allows Sandy to read Brodie in a less melodramatic fashion as rather ‘silly’ and to begin to extend towards her compassion as a ‘fragile’ human soul” (Carruthers 78).<sup>86</sup> Spark’s comment on the “nevertheless” principle supports this:

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<sup>86</sup> Martin McQuillan comes under particular scrutiny for his theoretical assumptions in the 2010 *Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark*. Other than Gerard Carruthers, Matthew Wickman and Drew Milne cautiously dismiss McQuillan’s assumption that Spark’s Catholicism is irrelevant with the making of her fictions. Other than the 2010 volume, Ian Gregson directly opposes McQuillan’s post-structuralist dismissals of Spark’s Catholicism in the 2005 article, “Muriel Spark’s Caricatural Effects.” Here Gregson argues that “McQuillan’s point — a truism of contemporary theory — is unhelpful when applied to Spark because what distinguishes her as a writer is her resistance to plurality and instability. . . . To discuss Spark in these terms makes her sound like any other postmodern writer, and distorts the extent to which her texts go against the grain of postmodern plurality” (4). Unlike Carruthers who links Spark’s Catholicism with her sense of compassion, however, Gregson discusses Spark’s didacticism, which seems to him to be the effect of her religion.

All grades of society constructed sentences bridged by “nevertheless.” It is my own instinct to associate the word, as the core of thought-pattern, with Edinburgh particularly. . . . I believe myself to be fairly indoctrinated by the habit of thought which calls for this word. . . . The Castle Rock is something, rising up as it does from pre-history between the formal grace of the New Town and the noble network of the Old. To have a great primitive black crag rising up in the middle of populated streets of commerce, stately squares and winding closes, is like the statement of an unmitigated fact preceded by “nevertheless.” (“Edinburgh-Born,” 22)

As Spark exposes her affection for her hometown, Edinburgh, by the word “nevertheless” in the above passage, Carruthers applies Spark’s “nevertheless” principle to reading Brodie whose silliness might appeal to readers when it helps to account for tender sympathy for the universal weakness in human beings. In the 1992 volume *Critical Essays on Muriel Spark*, Joseph Hynes suggests that the “nevertheless principle” becomes the most important point about Spark’s reminiscence of Edinburgh, a place giving her dual feelings, both the “never-ending sense of her native place” and the “acute awareness that it is precisely Edinburgh’s ‘Caledonian’ quality that constitutes an obstacle to her living there” (2). For Hynes, Spark’s “nevertheless principle” stands as “one that typifies her life, her psychology, and her work” (2). Sharing the assumption held by Hynes, Carruthers underlies the effects of Spark’s Christian belief on her characterization of fictional figures such as Brodie toward whom she sustains a



sympathetic attitude, no matter how many flaws inhere in the character. Neither Brodie's authoritarian behaviors nor her silliness could entirely dismiss some genuine qualities of the character's search of beauty and goodness in *Prime*, as Spark and Sandy cherish it.

So far as Brodie's yearning for beauty is concerned, however, what appears most precarious is that the character's creation of beautiful moments begets the drive towards death and self-destruction, rather than towards the pleasure in life—the primary purpose of art by Spark's own account, as she recounts in her essay “The Desegregation of Art” (1971):

Whether the form of art is tragic, comic, dramatic, lyrical, ironic, aggressive, it contains that element of pleasure which restores the proportions of spirit, opens windows in the mind. By means of art and literature our wits are sharpened, our intellect is refined, we can learn to know ourselves, how to appraise life with that pleasure which is the opposite and the enemy of boredom and of pain. (36)

While Spark proposes that aesthetic works enliven the sense of proportion, or the balance between body and spirit—the epitome of pleasure in life. Brodie increasingly approaches death in seeking for beauty. For Brodie, the pleasure in beauty culminates at the moment summing up “goodness” and “truth.” Concomitant with this comes the fear of missing the “right” timing of the beauty's blossom, therefore. Brodie's desire for beauty necessarily involves the anxiety about the passing of time that leads one to death. To escape from the ultimate extinction, Brodie tries to engrave the best portion of life in

the stasis of time, and to preserve it within the imaginary realm of narrative against the intrusion of external forces in the way that Keats's Greek sculptor confined the movements of human figures to the marble urn.

The creation of beauty performed by Brodie, hence, becomes identical with a negative effort to fight against the pressure of time, and inevitably her desire for beauty attends a paranoiac compulsion to seize "one's prime," the intensified and evanescent moment when one's accumulated talent, whether a gift for art, knowledge, physical beauty, or something else, is fully flourishing to the extent that it can positively influence other people. From Brodie's standpoint, the boundary of talents includes insight, instinct, and sex. As usual, Brodie rates multiple values according to a hierarchical order; for example, she sees Sandy's insight as a higher gift than Rose's instinct. Insofar as we consider that Brodie emphasizes one's self-sacrifice for cultivating the talent, it is little wonder that she puts the gift for instinct or sex on a lower level because instinct and sex have less to do with honing skills that she most privileges.

Brodie treats one's prime as if it were an epiphany that comes to a dedicated individual honing his or her talent to perfection for the full realization of the moment. As Brodie remarks that "it is important to recognize the years of one's prime" (6), being "the *crème de la crème*" seems to belong to an enthralling but fleeting time that will dissipate into air unless one carefully protects this delicate moment from mundane realities. As a vigorous achiever who has already been part of "the *crème de la crème*" during the year 1931, Brodie longs to adapt her own prime to her students through cultivating the perception and taste of the beautiful: she says, "If only you small girls

would listen to me I would make of you the crème de la crème” (11); “These are the years of my prime. You are benefiting by my prime” (45).

However, because the span of one’s prime is short and the effort to reach it should be intense, Brodie fears that her pupils—especially her favorite girl, Sandy—may fail to seize the most pleasurable moment of life, which appears as “a single moment of life’s beauty, passion, and unutterable eloquence, that passes, flames and goes. . .” (Beja 19).<sup>87</sup> In fact, the narrow accessibility of one’s prime is what makes the moment rare and precious in Brodie’s view, but her extreme concern about perfection both in achievement and timing triggers a repeated sense of anxiety, the exact antithesis of pleasure in life Spark sought for when making her works of art. “The crème de la crème” relies on one’s ability to create and recognize it, and as a redeemer saving her pupils from the Philistine, Brodie feels anxious to help them go through the process of achieving their primes. Determined to fulfill her obligation to the students, Brodie declares, “You girls are my vocation. If I were to receive a proposal of marriage tomorrow from the Lord Lyon King-of-Arms I would decline it. I am dedicated to you in my prime” (22). Brodie’s remarks express her will-to-sacrifice for enabling the girls to relish the climactic moment of life. However, for Spark, who defined her role as an artist as “a minor public servant,” instead of “a public master,” it appeared as an “arrogance” for an artist to attempt to redeem people, because the desire for redemption makes the so-called redeemers “feel themselves apart from ordinary people—and on the

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<sup>87</sup> Morris Beja quotes this line from Thomas Wolfe’s 1935 novel *Of Time and the River*; that Brodie clearly shares Wolfe’s view helps to establish her (in contrast to Spark herself) as essentially an adherent to a pre-existing school in her approach to beauty.

other side the oppression of ignorance” (“My Conversion,” 28).<sup>88</sup> Tellingly, the redemptive desire of artists increasingly separates them from ordinary life, while locating them in “the comfortable cells of lofty sentiment in which they are confined and never really satisfied” (“The Desegregation of Art,” 36).

Brodie’s attitude toward “the *crème de la crème*” can be compared to an artist’s approach to his or her work of art. Just as an artist should be highly conscious of every aesthetic process required to produce an artwork, Brodie manipulates what is concerned with inventing the epiphanic moment, attempting to create a larger state of affairs than the instantaneous nature of the epiphany in order to accomplish her ambition. On the one hand, Brodie wants her pupils to gain a sense of freedom by defying conformist culture and emphasizing the value of individual talents, but on the other, she approaches the girls as if they were aesthetic objects forged by an inspiring artist like Brodie herself. To succeed in inventing the girls’ primes, Brodie engages herself in a suspicious aesthetic project; if the Greek potter in Keats’s poem fixes the human lives within its “silent form” outside of time, she incorporates her students’ beginning and end into her own narratives. Significantly, Brodie’s “aesthetic project” becomes more and more dangerous because her ideal form of narrative demands the cruel trimming of any kind of “waste” that would not contribute to formulate the perfect frame of an ideal artifact.

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<sup>88</sup> In “My Conversion,” Spark proclaims, “I think of the artist as a minor public servant. If he starts thinking of himself as a public master, he’s in trouble. Your beliefs should check you there” (28). She goes on to show her passion for Max Beerbohm whose advantage is said to be his sense of humility. “What I like about Max Beerbohm is his attitude of not caring a damn about any of it, but under this he had a real style, a real humility. He didn’t worry too much about what’s not worth it. I used to worry until I got a sense of order, a sense of proportion. At least I hope I’ve got it now. You need it to be either a writer or a Christian” (28).

Praising Pavlova's perfect swan dance, for example, Brodie emphasizes one's dedication to profession, the epitome of art-in-life, but later on, she criticizes Sandy for becoming a Catholic nun: "What a waste. That is not the sort of dedication I meant" (66). This aesthetic vision of Brodie, whose ideal beauty emphasizes the crystallized time and the perfect mastery of bodily movement, points to fascism's aesthetic eugenics, the project of making the masses ("raw matter") more beautiful by eliminating any "vulgar" traits in order to create a harmonious artwork.

From Brodie's perspective, genuine beauty rests upon seamless appearance and elegant manners, and to accomplish the pure form of life, she installs the rules governing anything that transgresses the prescribed norms of beauty. This is why the more or less unruly girl, Mary Macgregor, described as "stupid" and "lump-like," comes to be victimized by the teacher who has previously expressed brotherly love for the unemployed crowds on the streets. Peter Robert Brown elaborates on the narrator's description of Mary as "lump-like," providing the connotations of the term; "presumably it means 'dull' or 'sluggish' or, perhaps, 'indefinite'— it might even mean 'fat'" (Brown 235). In *Prime*, for example, when Brodie detects a mark of ink staining the classroom floor, she presumes it is of course Mary who spilt the ink: "Who has spilled ink on the floor—was it you, Mary?". . . "I daresay it was you. I've never come across such a clumsy girl. And if you can't take an interest in what I am saying, please try to look as if you did" (14). As Brown notes, although Brodie never calls Mary "lump-like" (it is the narrator who speaks of it), Mary's clumsiness and presumably her appearance might mean an aesthetic failing in Brodie's view.

Brodie's aesthetic approach to life can make her an artistic figure, rather than a real artist whose creative imagination arouses the sense of pleasure that "restores the proportions of the human spirit," a life-principle in Spark's view ("The Desegregation of Art" 36).<sup>89</sup> Spark implies this point through the voice of her student. One day Monica Douglas tells other girls that she saw Brodie and Mr. Lloyd kissing in the art classroom. Sandy, as much adept at organizing narratives as her teacher, gets excited to hear the scandalous report, and pretends not to believe Monica's claim because by doing so, she would acquire more useful information of the scandal for visualizing the scene: "I don't believe all this," . . . "You must have been dreaming," says Sandy (54). To Sandy, who hides her actual intent, Rose retorts, "I believe it," . . . "Mr. Lloyd is an artist and Miss Brodie is artistic too" (54). For the ten-year-old girls, Teddy Lloyd, the Art master in the school, is an "artist" without doubt, and Brodie, who has declared that "pictorial art is my passion" (69), seems "artistic" due to her love for art, poetry, and her romantic temperament. According to Spark's description, Brodie's artistic approach to life makes her appear as more a mythical heroine than a human being of "flesh and blood" (*Prime*, 55). In accordance with her stress on life in fiction, and her confusion between reality and fiction, the students also regard the teacher less as a human creature than as an obscure and disembodied presence: "She had been a dominant presence rather than a physical woman like Norma Shearer or Elisabeth Bergner" (*Prime*, 94).

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<sup>89</sup> Spark came to particularly stress the sense of proportion after suffering from a mental breakdown, accompanying the hallucination, which coincided with her conversion to Catholicism in 1954. For detailed descriptions of her illness, see Spark's "My Conversion," p. 25, *Curriculum Vitae*, p. 206, and chapter 7 titled "Conversion: 1954-1957" in Martin Stannard's biography on Spark, *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (New York: Norton, 2009).

Careless of its dangerous effects, Brodie perpetuates her aestheticization in her everyday relationship with the special six girls, whose beginning and end are willfully woven by the artistic leader governing their self-contained world. Like an all-knowing, all-controlling godlike artist, Brodie imagines fictive scenarios, predicting future lives for the students that are pleasing to her own mind. Sandy, Brodie's most trusted pupil, says that "She thinks she is Providence . . . she thinks she is the God of Calvin, she sees the beginning and the end" (129). Brodie's totalizing orchestration of her pupils' lives aligns her with a master of an aesthetic form patterned by perfect unity and completeness. Put differently, Brodie's proleptic narratives proceed to unified endings, adopting coherent and seamless structures. The organic wholeness that Brodie desires to weave in *Prime* is what Malcolm Bradbury identifies as a distinguishing point of Spark's fiction in his influential essay "Muriel Spark's Fingernail" (1974), in which he hails Spark's rendition of structural coherence and completeness to her novels. The complete wholeness of literary form appealed to Bradbury and other critics such as Frank Kermode because the capability of weaving organic patterns seemed a sign of a novelist's stylistic genius.<sup>90</sup>

*Prime* however hints that Spark was suspicious of constructing a coherent master narrative because it seemed an enclosed artifact characterized by "totality, self-sufficiency, ultimacy" (Levenson 2011; 120), that which evokes "the comfortable cells

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<sup>90</sup> Bradbury called Spark "decidedly an aesthetician, not only because she is a poet and one of our most intelligent novelist, but also because she senses a necessity for wholeness and coherence" (248). To highlight the organic wholeness in Spark's narratives, Bradbury focused on Spark's sense of an ending, which Kermode dealt with in his 1967 book *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Here Kermode proposes that narratives are always proleptic because plots are forward moving, intentional, and oriented toward goals.

of lofty sentiment” Spark strove to avoid in her career (“The Desegregation of Art,” 36).<sup>91</sup> Gabriel Josipovici argues that Spark’s talent lies in her “emancipation from the tyranny of narrative” (2000; 60), and Spark reveals her passion for rupturing an aesthetically ordered world by unfolding how misguided Brodie’s “perfect” plots are, and to what extent her plot-making would affect the girls such as Joyce Emily, a delinquent girl killed in an accident in the Spanish Civil War, and Mary, who never realizes the nature of Brodie’s love stories, and who comes to die in a fire in a hotel after her boyfriend deserted her, while daydreaming about “the first years with Miss Brodie, sitting listening to all those stories and opinions which had nothing to do with the ordinary world” (13).

In this novel, Spark describes Brodie’s construction of organic patterns as a precarious aesthetic project, given that her narratives immobilize the multiple possibilities of the students’ futures by fixing them under a static formula. Though the making of scenarios provides Brodie with a sense of pleasure, Brodie’s narratives inhere in an enclosed structure, which Fredric Jameson called a system of totality—a self-sufficient textual frame following the Hegelian “ideal of logical closure” (49). In *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Jameson argues that making a narrative is a symbolic act because any storytelling frame mirrors a political fantasy of the historical period with which the narrative is composed: Brodie’s artificial mapping of the girls’ beginning and end shadows the political climate of the thirties, in particular, via an attraction toward Italian fascism, led by Mussolini, striving to exert his political will by creating fascist

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<sup>91</sup> In *Modernism* (2011), Michael Levenson uses these terms (totality, self-sufficiency, and ultimacy) to explain Mallarmé’s vision of autonomous works of art.



spectacles such as festivals, rituals, and ceremonies. In a speech addressed in a 1926 speech, Mussolini affirmed his idea of uniting politicians with artists: “That politics is an art there is no doubt. Certainly it is not a science, nor is it empiricism. It is thus art. Also because in politics there is a lot of intuition. ‘Political’ like artistic creation is a slow elaboration and a sudden divination” (*Scritti e discorsi*, 179).<sup>92</sup> Mussolini declared a similar political agenda in 1932: “Politics is the highest of arts, the art of arts, the most gold amongst the arts, because it sculpts the most difficult, living material: man” (qtd. in Schmid, 128). Mussolini’s act of creation or world-transformation affirms the claim of Claude Lefort, who argues that the idea of creation lies at the heart of a politics that aims at establishing a new society on fresh ground and free of limits from laws, tradition, or ethical values, in his 1986 book, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*.

Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi points out that Mussolini’s analogized the sculptor with the artist-politician, while comparing the masses with raw material for art:

Fascism turned sensory alienation into the negation of human nature, the depersonalization of the ‘masses,’ the deindividualization of the body politic, as evidenced in Mussolini’s identification of the ‘masses’ with dead matter, a block of marble to be shaped. . . the conception of the ‘mass’ as raw material meant that one could smash the ‘masses,’ hit them, mold them: they would be no pain, no scream, no protest, for there were no sense involved (13).

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<sup>92</sup> See Benito Mussolini, *Scritti e Discorsi*, 12 vols (Milan: Hoepli, 1934-1939), vol. V, p. 279. Mussolini, however, was unclear how art was affected by politics.

Mussolini, led by “an aesthetic, desensitized approach to politics,” considered the world “a canvas upon which to create a work of art, a masterpiece completely neglectful of human values” (Falasca-Zamponi 13). As Falasca-Zamponi suggests, Mussolini attempted to fulfill the idea of the omnipotent totalitarian artist transforming the world through his artistic vision, rather than through traditional modes of political power such as militarism; consequently, he forged fascist men and the masses, just as a sculptor needs to melt the clay for his work of art.

A number of scholars describe Brodie as a fascistic woman consciously or unconsciously practicing the will-to-control in everyday life through her abuse of power. Turning to Brodie’s homage to Mussolini, her formation of an illegitimate elite group, and her theatrical behaviors evoking the political gestures and creative process of Mussolini and Hitler, these critics have identified specific modes of fascism that are debunked and developed by the protagonist’s actions and desires.<sup>93</sup> As Lodge cogently remarks, Brodie’s fascination with fascism derives from “an extension of her egotism and romantic sensibility,” rather than from “a reasoned political attitude” (Lodge 247), and Brodie cannot but deepen her illusion of fascism insofar as she remains “culpably naïve in admiring Mussolini” (Ashworth 42), and “blissfully unaware of the bullying tactics” fascists employed (Murray and Tait 108-109). In exploring Brodie’s attraction to fascism and emphasizing the character’s “naivety” and “unintentional” domination,

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<sup>93</sup> See Lodge’s “The Uses and Abuses of Omniscience: Method and Meaning in Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*” (1970), Isobel Murray and Bob Tait’s *Ten Modern Scottish Novels* (1984), Ann Ashworth’s “The Betrayal of the Mentor in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*” (1995), *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction* (2002) edited by Martin McQuillan, and Judy Suh’s *Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Twentieth Century British Fiction* (2009), among others.

these critics make it possible to understand how a romantic beauty seeker finds it difficult to perceive the enormous violence behind fascism's aesthetic appeal, and consequently imitates fascists. Their perspective properly challenges the more or less simplified account of the novel proposed by recent critics such as McQuillan, who states that *Prime* is "Spark's novel of Fascism and fascisms" (4), as if Spark used her character merely for political purposes.

I remain discontented with those who investigate Brodie's psychological impulses in adoring fascism because they tend to attribute her desires to an individual's idiosyncratic characteristics; Murray and Tait, for example, suggest that Brodie is "an instinctive and a relatively uncomprehending" individual (110). I am more inclined to situate Brodie in historical context, considering her a modern figure characterized by a variety of blended desires and contradictions. On the one hand, Brodie is a romantic aesthete whose artistic motto art for art's sake had previously occupied a radical position against a sweeping utilitarianism; at this point, Brodie thinks of herself as a cultural revolutionary. Turning to romantic anticapitalism, on the other hand, Brodie reveals some reactionary aspects by seeking to support the Fascist and Nazi ideologies throughout Hitler's and Mussolini's political regimes.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984). This book exemplifies the complex blending of mixed desires sweeping the 1930's under the Hitler's influence: reactionary modernists. Herf defines reactionary modernists as "nationalists who turned the romantic anticapitalism of the German Right away from backward-looking pastoralism, pointing instead to the outlines of a beautiful new order replacing the formless chaos due to capitalism in a united, technologically advanced nation" (2). Brodie cannot be counted among the reactionary modernists because she remains a would-be aesthete resisting the philistine culture of technology. Like many others during the period, she bears seemingly contradictory desires at once.

It seems that Brodie's ignorance of political practice resembles the naïve (or sinister) artistic figures drawn to the Fascist or Nazi regimes such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti or Leni Riefenstahl. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Italian fascists refashioned themselves as beauty lovers distinguishing their violence by tirelessly inventing "symbolic means and forms that would excited emotions in the people" (Falasca-Zamponi 6): the making of the public spectacles and mythical events such as the march became the major way for the fascists to indoctrinate masses.<sup>95</sup> In this sense, Walter Benjamin defines fascism as the aestheticization of politics in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," supposing that fascism is the dangerous consummation of the aesthetic heritage of *l'art pour l'art* in the thirties. To show the extent that the fascist rhetoric leans on an aesthetic appeal, especially in terms of the visual, Benjamin quotes from F. T. Marinetti, a Futurist poet and fascist supporter: "War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony" (Benjamin 241).

If the Italian Futurist idealized the organized set of war machines as a marvelous visual spectacle, Brodie transforms political events into the dramatic scenes of a theatrical performance, akin to her characteristic aestheticization of living individuals via her construction of the fanciful world of the Brodie set and her framing of the girls' futures. One passage in *Prime* exemplifies the ways Brodie beautifies political life in the context of fascism and thereby exposes the extent to which her romantic understanding

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<sup>95</sup> See Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).

of politics has misguided her. At the beginning of the new semester in 1931, she tells the students about her experiences during the summer holidays:

Here is a larger formation of Mussolini's fascisti, it is a better view of them than that of last year's picture. They are doing splendid things as I shall tell you later. I went with my friends for an audience with the Pope. . . . I wore my silk dress with the large red poppies which is just right for my colouring. Mussolini is one of the greatest men in the world, far more so than Ramsay MacDonald, and his fascisti—. (45-46)

The juxtaposition of Mussolini and the Pope provides a useful way to understand the nature of Brodie's romantic fantasy toward Mussolini. Just as Brodie is drawn to the Pope not for religious reasons (she is a Presbyterian, disapproving of the Church of Rome), but for his office's romantic implications, she idealizes Mussolini as if he were an actor on the stage. In Brodie's view, Mussolini and his troops create an aesthetic spectacle, which seems so arresting that she can take voyeuristic pleasure by watching their performance. Preoccupied with the surface images of the political scene, Brodie fails to recognize the content of Mussolini's fascism, whose spectacular appearance deprives spectators of a chance to contemplate what is behind the surface, and her blindness to its actual content facilitates her mastery over other individuals.<sup>96</sup>

Mussolini's fascism and Brodie's understanding of beauty interact in a mutually reinforcing way: Brodie's romantic disposition stirs her attraction to fascism in the

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<sup>96</sup> Benjamin suggests how an aestheticized politics deceives people in his 1936 essay: "Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves" (241).

historical context, whereas fascism's aestheticized politics unconsciously fosters her daily aestheticization, namely the making of organic patterns based on her students. Consequently, Brodie fails to take any ethical responsibility as an artist, who, according to Spark, needs to create "the art of ridicule" in challenging the "strutting and posturing" of Mussolini and Hitler, whose political shows appear no more than "something out of comic opera" ("The Desegregation of Art," 35).

Brodie's aestheticization of political life fosters her ignorance of political content and increasingly produces self-erasing effects in a way that represses the substantial body. These two points can be elaborated in dialogue with Susan Sontag's 1974 essay "Fascinating Fascism," where Sontag brought up both points as the primary harms brought about by the will-to-beautification. Sontag invokes a morally blind beauty seeker, Leni Riefenstahl, a German photographer and film director famous for her propagandistic work of art, *Triumph of the Will* (1934), which expresses her fascination with Adolf Hitler, even while the artist denies her intention to glamorize the Nazi leader. According to Sontag, Riefenstahl deployed the rhetoric of order, power, and purity in making visual art that aimed to celebrate Nazism and the dictator. Despite the unambiguous adoration of the dictator communicated by her films, Riefenstahl positioned herself as an "individualist-artist, defying philistine bureaucrats and censorship by the patron state" (Sontag 1974; 79). Although Riefenstahl claimed that she merely supported the aesthete's motto, art for art's sake, her aesthetic notion facilitated the production of propaganda. Like the blind artist drawn to Hitler's mythic power consciously or unconsciously, Brodie's preoccupation with art for art's sake is

mingled with the fascists' ideological leanings, though she remains unaware of the content of her aestheticized politics.

Spark shows the superficial nature of Brodie's aestheticization of politics by revealing her adoration of fascists' black uniforms. The hyper-organized appearance of their black uniforms enchants Brodie, who feels that the sophisticated style of the uniforms is a nice icon of beauty. Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism" provides a valuable discussion of the rhetoric of uniforms. Unmasking a fantasy about uniforms, a dress code appealing to the longing for perfect harmony, Sontag explains that unlike rather unstylish American army uniforms, the SS uniforms are characterized by their stylistic details, precisely designed for a spectacular display. For Sontag, such a dress code satisfies voyeuristic desire, but in fact, it violently constrains the interior content—a human being's physical body. If the SS uniforms cover any bodily imperfection beneath the surface, in *Prime* Brodie's narrative frames suppress the individual desires of the girls in favor of organic unity.

The "aestheticized" human beings in Brodie's imagination include her pupils, fascists, and even herself. She forges the girls in her organic narratives, turns the fascist troops into fantasy, and further, plunges herself into the self-made fiction that flatters her taste for sublime love. Of course, the consequence is dangerous and clumsy. Caught up in the fascist logic of beautifying everyday life, Brodie gains aesthetic pleasures, but in the end she cannot escape from the dangerous confusion between reality and fantasy, which sharpens her dichotomous understanding of body and spirit, and increasingly leads her to "the ultimate mode of self-murder" by fostering her illusion that she presides

as a bodiless spiritual inspiration, rather than a corporeal human being (Waugh 70).

Brodie's self-erasing imagination, a metaphorical suicide, culminates when she chooses Rose Stanley as a lover for Teddy Lloyd, an art master whom she loves but renounces partly because he is a married man.

Confronting the difficulty of her love, Brodie compensates for her despair by inventing a romantic plot and casting herself as a dramatic heroine. She feels that she is consummating her unresolved passion for the lover through her self-made narrative, but the plot demonstrates the depth of Brodie's illusion. Within her ostensibly seamless romantic fiction, Brodie becomes the everlasting beloved of Teddy, no matter who his "physical" lover might be: she says to Sandy, "I am his Muse," and adds, "But I have renounced his love in order to dedicate my prime to the young girls in my care. I am his Muse but Rose shall take my place" (129). What embarrasses the seventeen-year-old Sandy is that Brodie's plan for Teddy and Rose is not a mere theory but a serious strategy she hopes to make reality. To protect their love against contamination, Brodie sets up an erotic substitution as if Rose were her puppet, while she takes the role of spiritual muse. The implication of becoming the muse precisely means that Brodie erases her corporeality, and the removal of her body insinuates her orientation toward a dangerous self-effacement, and death. Indeed, Brodie drifts into a conventional muse-artist relation, in which a female muse acts as the dead beloved of the artist, and speaks through only the male poet, while serving "to efface the materiality Woman stands for" (Bronfen 363, 361). Owing to the exaggerated illusion of aesthetic wholeness and narcissistic purity, Brodie performs her suicide by playing the role of the muse, and



enters a perfect world of her own making that annihilates the boundary between fiction and reality; consequently, she is pinned down in her self-created fiction, like the lovers whose animate movements have been arrested by the Greek potter in Keats' poem.

Brodie's obsession with Teddy's muse reveals her orientation toward bodiless love, and it settles on her taste for art and poetry. Spark illustrates Brodie's specific preference for arts, ranging from Leonardo Da Vinci's portrait, "Mona Lisa," Alfred Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings. These poems and paintings bear a common feature: they all represent dead female bodies. In the works of art, the beautiful women's presence stands as their voice, smile or clothes, rather than their physical bodies. The poem Brodie often recites to the class with "half shut" eyes and "thrown back" head is Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," by which Brodie feels infatuated with the beauty of the floating dead lady, who dies for love. According to Kathy Alexis Psomiades, the Lady of Shalott "appears from the outside world to be a disembodied voice," and "[i]nvisible and barely audible, the Lady engages in an activity different in kind from that of the reapers or even that of the questing Lancelot because she has nothing to show for her labors, no quantifiable product no visible result" (26). Psomiades further suggests that the lady becomes "all body," once disembodied, as Lancelot's comment is only about her body—"She has a lovely face"—, which shows the process in which the lady "becomes a visible body in a moment of sensational self-display, a beautiful object for the contemplation of the multitude" (26).

As a feminist career woman talking "to men as man-to-man" (*Prime*, 44), Brodie wants to play as an educational reformer and in fact remains loyal to her profession

before she is forced to resign her teaching position. But at the same time, she has been drawn to the image of the dead woman, who becomes “no longer artist but art object” (Psomiades 26). The disjunction between the body and the spirit can also be read in her response to Rossetti’s “Beata Beatrix”: “Here is a picture of Dante Meeting Beatrice, Mary, sit up and don’t slouch. It was a sublime moment in a sublime love. By whom was the picture painted?. . . It was painted by Rossetti” (48).<sup>97</sup> For Brodie, Rossetti’s painting could be the medium that satisfies her attraction to the spiritual transcendence of body and time by representing “the sublime moment in a sublime love,” which is articulated by her as “one’s prime,” and appropriated by literary modernists as epiphany, the transcendental moment of spiritual ecstasy often privileging the viewer’s gaze over the object, the feminine corpse.

In addition to Rossetti’s painting, Brodie’s aesthetic taste for bodiless beauty is obviously presented in her fascination with the abstract smile of Mona Lisa. Toward the sublimation from physical bodies, Brodie considers that the highest standard of beauty lies in the “expression of composure” characterizing Mona Lisa’s smile. She asks her pupils to cultivate such an expression as the feminine ideal: “It is one of the best assets of a woman, an expression of composure, come foul, come fair. Regard the Mona Lisa over yonder!” (21). Brodie’s fascination with Mona Lisa displays her clinging to an ideal notion of harmony and proportion, epitomized by Leonardo da Vinci, a master of

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<sup>97</sup> See Walter Hamilton’s 1882 book, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (New York: AMS P, 1971). Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a poet and a painter, was an original member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In 1850, the Pre-Raphaelites started the magazine entitled *The Germ* to resist the Philistines. In describing the role of D. G. Rossetti in the Pre-Raphaelite group, Hamilton speaks of the Pre-Raphaelites’ typical style in paintings: “[the] Pre-Raphaelites imitate no pictures; they paint from nature only (3).

“correct symmetry and proportion” of the human body (Eco 2004; 80). In the perfect calmness of Mona Lisa’s smile, which looks almost “divine rather than human” (Vasari 431), Brodie finds aesthetic perfection, completeness and balance, the qualities structuring ideal feminine beauty in the discourse of aesthetics, literature and philosophy since the ancient Greek period. In a chapter in *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater comments on the portrait of Mona Lisa, and the particular appeal of her smile:

It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secretes of the grave. . . . Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern era. (83-84)

As Pater elaborates on the qualities of the beauty expressed in the painting, the Mona Lisa plays as the visual container absorbing the “ideas” across the world, which are in

effect the viewers' projected desires; the human-object, thereby, becomes "explicitly an embodied abstraction, her flesh made up of ideas" (Psomiades 200). Like da Vinci who was fascinated by Lady Lisa's curious smile, Pater is drawn to her smile, a synecdoche identified with the person herself, Lady Lisa, while proving a case in which a spectator adopts "fragmentation and fetishization of the culturally selected parts of the female body" (Michie 86).<sup>98</sup> As Pater remarks that Lady Lisa "is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave" (83), the beauty of the woman can be accounted for only by the conjunction with death, according to him. By the same token, Brodie regards the Mona Lisa as epitomizing the perfect beauty she has sought for due to her "smile," which signifies complete composure and perfection in its balance. However, Sandy, the most observant girl, feeling against the teacher's preoccupation with the flawless feminine beauty, says to herself: "Mona Lisa in her prime smiled in steady composure even though she had just come from the dentist and her lower jaw was swollen" (21). In fact, Sandy's cynicism toward the overwhelming composure of Mona Lisa reflects Spark's own objection to the idealization of hyper-coherence, which Spark criticizes by implying that Brodie's creation of organic narratives suppresses concrete human feelings and desires beneath an orderly appearance.

*Prime* features a remarkable passage in which Spark interlocks the heroine's attraction to Nazism, the Kantian universal agreement in aesthetic tastes, and the effacement of corporeal bodies. In other words, Spark juxtaposes Brodie's gesture

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<sup>98</sup> See Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987).

echoing the “Heil Hitler” salute, her fixed notion of the ideal shape of an opened window, and her fascination with the sublime picture of Rossetti: these three dimensions appear in sequence. One day Brodie’s even dressed like a Nazi. She stands in “in her brown dress like a gladiator with raised arm and eyes flashing like a sword,” and mimics the yelling for Hitler:

“Hail Caesar!” she cried again, turning radiantly to the window light, as if Caesar sat there. “Who opened the window?” said Miss Brodie dropping her arm.

Nobody answered.

“Whoever has opened the window has opened it too wide,” said Miss Brodie. “Six inches is perfectly adequate. More is vulgar. One should have an innate sense of these things.” (47)

Brodie’s “Hail Caesar!”—which mimics the Nazi’s salute—immediately follows what seems to echo the Kantian notion of the universal judgment of beauty. In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant argues that one’s subjective judgment of beauty can be shared with everyone else because it is “a priori,” the product of the common sense knowledge inherent to any individual, which concept echoes Brodie’s claim that “one should have an innate sense of these things” (47). Sloppily appropriating the Kantian axiom of universal validity, in which beauty is relative to the “tastes” and “faculties,” Brodie endeavors to resist what she thinks of as vulgarity, and to do this, she imposes the strict mathematical definition of beauty on others, even for the most trivial everyday activity. This kind of behavior makes her nothing less than an authoritarian teacher insisting on

rigid standards of beauty, although her deepest aspiration lies in resuscitating individual spirit in the midst of encroaching utilitarianism. Brodie ostensibly encourages her pupils to form their own independent judgments, but she actually coerces them into agreeing with her subjective aesthetic taste. The teacher's taste for beauty becomes the universal norm the students must take up. Early in the novel, for instance, the girls receive puzzling questions from their teacher while taking her aesthetic lessons. Brodie asks the students: "Who is the greatest Italian painter?" When they give her the anticipated answer, Leonardo da Vinci, once Brodie's favorite artist, she corrects them: "That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favourite" (8).

Brodie's normalization of her taste for beauty (the ideal shape of an opened window here) is conflated with the image of Nazi or Mussolini. Consciously or unconsciously, Brodie comes to imitate the authoritarian attitudes of the political dictators in a way that forces the girls to internalize her personal conception of beauty—a totalitarian mode of "consensus-building" that establishes the foundation of fascism's principles (Suh 167).<sup>99</sup> In effect, the heroine's constitution of aesthetic rules affirms a mode of Fascism attempting to represent "the new Italian man's identity" by means of "the tight observation of aesthetic rules—rules that were conceived as both the signifiers and the signified of fascist qualities" (Falasca-Zamponi 184).

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<sup>99</sup> In *Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Twentieth Century British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Judy Suh is talking about the "subtleness" of Brodie's fascistic approach. Randall Stevenson brings a similar point. See Stevenson, "The Postwar Context of Spark's Writing" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010) 98-109. It is stated that Brodie's totalizing desire is examined not so much as dictators like Mussolini or Hitler, but "as ones particularly appropriate to an artist or writer" (Stevenson 100).

Spark carefully arranges Brodie's attraction to Rossetti's sublime art, and the two modes of gestures, her theatrical salute and enforcement of aesthetic standards, in sequence. By doing so, Spark makes visible the subtle conjunction of the three big ideas sweeping the wide realm of philosophy, art, and politics for the last decades. If the Kantian universal validity and Fascism's totalitarian behavior resort to a mode of consensus building, the notion of sublime beauty idealizes abstract female bodies, as is the phenomenon that the Fascists envisioned the evaporation of physical qualities.

### **The Solid Image Does Not Melt into Air**

As discussed so far, in *Prime*, Spark deploys “the six-inch-opened window” to depict how the standardization of beauty is amalgamated with the Nazis' and Fascists' aestheticization of political life in the 1930s. Moreover, reverberating with the mathematical proportion in the Mona Lisa, the prescribed form of the window reflects Brodie's obsession with her dictum “the expression of composure.” Spark's next novel *The Girls of Slender Means* presents a revision of “the six-inch-opened window” — the symbolic trope epitomizing the institutional mastery over individual bodies: here it is a narrow lavatory window measuring up the girls' body size, while giving “rewards” for the girl whose body is skinny enough to pass through the frame of the window: attention, admiration and sexual pleasure. Within the frame that assigns the standard of beauty, the private body becomes a public site absorbing a regime of disciplined control and the gaze of spectators.

If *Prime* tends to raise the feeling of nostalgia toward the aesthete-teacher to a certain degree, *Girls* dispels any magical impact of beautification and suggests more ambivalent attitudes toward the crowds assembled in the public realm: out of the seemingly chaotic crowds, Spark pays attention to an anonymous human figure whose passion toward life unsettles the obsession with perfection and the fascist logic that exploits beauty to sacrifice private bodies. The taming of bodies had to be done for the Italian fascists to effectively manipulate the masses, as Falasca-Zamponi notes, because they feared the desires and temptations of human bodies, a potential locus that might endanger the public order of authority, giving rise to disruptive resistance to power (126). This became the context in which Fascism privileged spirit over sense, self-relinquishment, and the release of passion, attacking “the ‘animal’ character of human passions,” as expressed through the corporeal site (Falasca-Zamponi 139). Spark’s 1963 fiction portrays a microcosmic world reflecting the fascist regime. Overwhelmed by the fear of the girls’ consumption of food, the fictional institution requires the suppression of individual desire and appetite through pursuing a totalitarian standard of beauty, a skinny body.

In *Girls*, most actions take place in a female hostel, the May of Teck Club, which embodies a precise atmosphere of the 1945 London full of bombsites. Standing in “the main danger-zone between domestic life and the war going on outside”(8), the May of Teck has been “three times window-shattered since 1940,” and is operated by a cold utilitarian logic. Except for a few older women, most of the residents are young women. They include Selina Redwood, a slim girl preoccupied with her own elegance and poise;



Joanna Childe, a lover of poetry; and Jane Wright, a fat girl who works for a publisher. During this period of rationing and official austerity, every woman in the hostel lives in “nun-like poverty,” but nonetheless, “the most attractive, sophisticated and lively girls” (30) possess their own rooms at the top of the house, while other residents share the rooms under the top floor. The greatest advantage for the top floor girls is that the roof of the house is an ideal place for sunbathing (32). However, even among the girls on the top floor, not everyone can get the chance to sunbathe because the roof is accessible only from the very narrow lavatory window.

Selina can freely access the roof because she is slim enough to get through the lavatory window. Selina’s skinny body becomes the standard of beauty not simply because it arouses voyeuristic pleasure but also because her body proves that she has perfectly internalized the discipline the institution imposes on its members. Tellingly, the lavatory window establishes whether the institution has provided the residents with the proper (small) amount of food: the frame of the window measures the girls’ body size and filters out “losers” from the everyday beauty-competition taking place in the May of Teck. The supreme champion is Selina, who has succeeded in shaping the slimmest body among the residents. Her body is deemed superior to others because it seems “so austere and economically furnished” (92). As a reward for her effort to construct the ideal shape, Selina can have love affairs with male visitors and later save herself from the burning hotel by getting through the lavatory window. One day Selina measures the size of the window:

The aperture was seven inches wide by fourteen inches long. It opened casement-wise. . . . Selina was extremely slim. The question of weight and measurement was very important on the top floor. The ability or otherwise to wriggle sideways through the lavatory window would be one of those tests that only went to prove the club's food policy to be unnecessarily fattening. (32)

Echoing Brodie's sentence "six inches is perfectly adequate. More is vulgar," Selina boasts her mathematical accuracy by announcing the exact size of the window, an uncomfortable truth most of the May of Teck girls want to evade. The "seven inches wide" lavatory window stands as an austere measurement regulating their bodies, while prohibiting a body swollen even by an inch from passing the test. The window functions as a still more powerful tool in that it technically controls the girls' material bodies as well as their consciousness. Insofar as a girl can get through the narrow frame of the window, she is considered charming and ethical in the May of Teck because her slim body manifests her "reasonable" eating patterns in a time of economic constraints. If Brodie identifies beauty with goodness by adopting the Keatsian romantic notion, the May of Teck sets up the skinny body as a mode of beauty and goodness during wartime. While Brodie yearns to transcend her physical body to experience the sublime moment, "the crème de la crème," and to constantly remain her lover's spiritual "Muse," the May of Teck girls wish to literally cut off the fat in their bodies because fatness appears to violate the standard of beauty that also becomes a moral code in the institution. The more frugally the girls eat, the better they look; the thinner they are, the more powerful

they feel because the privilege of taking some leisure time on the roof can be possessed by only a few girls passing the window-test, which demands the constant regulation of one's appetite and taste for food.

Blending the aesthetic and the moral codes, the club's food policy exercises its power over the girls' bodies by forcing them to maintain meticulous control. As a result of internalizing the increasing discipline, their bodies become what Michel Foucault describes as "subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (182). Foucault argued that social institutions tend to manipulate, shape and train the operations of the body through exercising massive power over individuals' bodies in order to transform the active bodies into "docile bodies" obedient enough to serve the utilitarian goals of the society. The May of Teck is a 1945 version of the authoritarian society disciplining female bodies according to the logic of utilitarianism. In the small-scale Foucauldian and fascistic institution, there is no critical person like Sandy who is becoming skeptical of Brodie's controlling behavior, and later betrays the teacher, whom she calls "a born Fascist" (*Prime*, 134). Rather than questioning what makes the heart of the May of Teck, the girls fearfully observe their own bodies to see if they meet the standard of beauty the institution has imposed on them.

The May of Teck furthers the sense of hierarchy among the girls by reinforcing the clear-cut distinction between beauty and ugliness according to their body size. This is why the matter of weight and size predominates in the girls' mentality. These girls decide what to eat or what to leave out of their meals, and their weight-control cult fits the need for authoritarian structure. Jane, "brainy but somewhat below standard, socially,

at the May of Teck” (20), is an expert in calculating calories. Counting how many calories she has eaten per day, Jane is fighting against her huge appetite. Jane’s addiction to numbers echoes that of Selina, who needs to know the size of the lavatory window: these two girls look similar at this point, though Jane fails to shape a slender body, while Selina produces it as a result of eating “a little bit of everything” (34). Whatever their actual body shapes are, the girls have an extreme fear of gaining weight.

In an essay titled “Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity” (2010), Patricia Waugh argues that the “fear of the body” increases within capitalist economies, where “the body may come to be regarded as so much waste and dirt if it cannot be absorbed efficiently into the regulatory machine” (87). Resonating with Waugh’s discussion, the girls put their bodies under strict weight control in dread of being undervalued by the institution. Within the utilitarian regime the girls are eager to eliminate “waste,” in this case, the surplus fat in the body. It is no wonder that Jane feels marginalized because of her fatness. Though Jane claims that she needs to “feed” her brain, she usually spends “much of her time in eager dread of the next meal, and in making resolutions what to eat of it and what to leave” (32). While Selina’s slimness meets the aesthetic and ethical criteria of the institution, Jane’s fat body falls short of the standard of beauty and goodness, so that a senior resident looks at her “bare fat knees” with “disapproval” (78).

Jane’s despair over her fatness increases when she cannot borrow a Schiaparelli taffeta evening dress, described as a “marvelous dress, which caused a stir wherever it went . . . shared by all the top floor on special occasions, excluding Jane whom it did not

fit” (35). That the dress does not fit Jane foreshadows a new mode of beauty, Jane’s corporeality, which Spark brings to the book’s end. Like the lavatory window, the Schiaparelli dress functions as a fictional device that masks and further effaces one’s substantial body. The clothing becomes the primary source of self-presentation, and by doing so it displaces the subject’s substantial body and produces a delusional self-image. Selina feels proud of her own charm, but she undergoes a process of physical disembodiment beneath the fashionable clothing. The Schiaparelli dress constitutes Selina’s central aura, while she is performing the role of elegance in the luxurious item: when Selina “furled like a long soft sash, in her chair, came to Nicholas in a gratuitous flow” (67), she appears like a non-human object. At the end of the story Selina rescues the Schiaparelli dress out of the burning building, and the dress looks like a human form: the coat hanger holding the dress is dangling “like a headless neck and shoulders” (125), in which Selina’s body is grotesquely disembodied.

In particular, the Schiaparelli dress becomes the central vehicle that creates the surface image of Selina and other “slender” girls from the view of an anarchist and Bohemian poet, Nicholas Farrington, who frequently visits the May of Teck during the summer of 1945 to quench his chronic boredom. Here is room for a link between the Schiaparelli dress and the fascists’ uniforms. Just as Brodie adores the marching fascists for their stylish black uniforms, Nick is enamored of a girl named Pauline when she is wearing the dress, which produces a surrealistic effect, as a “costume” does so on stage. It is the garment that usurps the place of her physical body:

He said, “I don’t think I’ve ever seen such a gorgeous dress.”

“Schiaparelli,” she said.

He said, “Is it the one you swap amongst your selves?”

“Who told you that?”

“You look beautiful,” he replied.

She picked up the rustling skirt and floated away up the staircase.

Oh, girls of slender means! (89)

Through the sentimental lens of Nick, the fanciful appearance of the Schiaparelli dress epitomizes the identity of the slender girls and the residence for them. Deriving a poetic image from the dressed-up girl and the May of Teck, Nick views the girls and the house together as the emblem of “the beautiful heedless poverty of a Golden Age” (65), and then gets aesthetic pleasure through the amusement of his imagination.

On the surface, Nick seems akin to neither the compulsive beauty seeker nor the uncritical people internalizing the utilitarian principles without speculation. As an anarchist, Nick despises the totalitarian social control over individuals, and as a Bohemian aesthete, he has no burning desire to create a masterpiece through everyday experiences; he little wants to be troubled by overwhelming ambition but hopes to “lightly” touch on the girls of slender means (59). One might assume that the Bohemian beholder’s idyllic fantasy of objects has less to do with the possessive and aggressive manner of authoritarian figures than with a soft and elastic contemplation of beauty that scarcely involves domination. Notwithstanding, Spark encourages us to see that the observer’s passive manner of relishing beauty may produce the same effect that control freaks would bring to aesthetic objects: that is, the effacement of physical bodies. The

girl in the “aesthetic dress” endows the would-be bohemian with a sense of the poetic sublime, in which he looks at her as an imaginary form of transcendence. Just as Mona Lisa’s smile has been considered equivalent with the woman herself, the fancy dress comes to signify the figure of Selina under the eyes of the self-complacent aesthete, whose inadequacy as an ethical viewer is constantly implied by his naïve aestheticization of the May of Teck girls and of the institution itself.

Intoxicated by “the beautiful aspects of poverty and charm amongst these girls in the brown-papered drawing room” (61), Nick beautifies the girls of the May of Teck, and thus transforms them into abstract symbols. If Selina personifies pastoral anarchism, the ideal society that he has always pictured in his mind, Joanna, an elocution teacher whose voice sounds exceedingly beautiful, serves as his spiritual muse offering auditory pleasures.<sup>100</sup> The beautifying process effaces the girls’ corporeal bodies, realizing the huge chasm between his perception and the reality of the girls’ existence. In appropriating the girls through his predetermined imagination, Nicholas cannot understand that “The May of Teck girls were nothing if not economical” (95). Nick approaches the girls out of his egoistic drive, judges them based on the surface images tuned by his own sentimental notions, and as a consequence, turns individuals into abstract types, which characteristically occurs under fascist and utilitarian structures. Several critics have spoken of the change of Nick’s soul, arguing that he attains a momentous awakening to evil on the day of the fire and V. J. night. Nick makes the sign

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<sup>100</sup> The poem Joanna most frequently recites is Gerard Manley Hopkins’ *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. Joanna’s taste for poetry suggests her inclination to transcendental beauty, foreboding her death on the day of fire.

of the cross when he sees Selina rescuing from the burning building the Schiaparelli dress instead of her friends. In the huge crowd outside Buckingham Palace on V. J. night, Nick witnesses a pointless act of violence, in which a seaman stabs a woman to death. Kermode and Patrick Parrinder, among others, see these intertwined experiences as epiphanic revelations leading Nick to his true conversion and later to a martyr's death in Haiti.<sup>101</sup> By such an interpretation, these critics mean to link Spark with modernist predecessors such as Joyce, textually embodying sudden spiritual manifestations to provide the subject with a remarkable artistic vision.

However, Spark departed from Joyce, whose aesthetic subject undergoes an epiphanic vision, an intensive spiritual moment through which the protagonist feels like capturing the visible spirit of beauty in others. In other words, in Joyce's texts, the epiphanic experience plays as an enchantment bound to the mood of aesthetic mysticism. For example, in a much discussed scene in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Stephen Dedalus experiences an epiphanic moment in gazing at a beautiful young girl standing before him in the river. Walking along the strand, Stephen sees a girl who seems "like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird" (185). For Stephen, his vision of the wading girl remains a sign of freedom for an independent artist, but the reader can see that Stephen's gaze effaces the girl's bodily details. Stephen regards the girl's "long slender bare legs" as "delicate as a crane's," her thighs as "softhued as ivory," and her bosom as "a bird's soft and slight" breast (185-186). As Morris Beja notes, the girl's "flesh as 'softhued as ivory' makes

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<sup>101</sup> See Kermode, "To *The Girls of Slender Means*" (1963) and Patrick Parrinder, "Muriel Spark and Her Critics" (1983).



her an image of the Virgin Mary, the Tower of Ivory” (100-01). Under the spell of the desiring subject’s mystic vision, the object’s corporeal body is disembodied or transformed into abstract images. “The Dead” similarly dramatizes the way in which a male viewer’s spiritual vision annihilates the concreteness of the external world. In “The Dead,” looking at the outside scenery filled with snow, Gabriel Conroy feels tender love toward all humanity, while his wife’s thoughts wander to a boy from her youth who had died. Yet Gabriel’s epiphany, his discovery of beauty, which Richard Ellmann considered a sublime moment for its moral transformation of Gabriel (249), takes place when he perceives “a space filled with blank and smooth surfaces” concealing the distinctiveness of external objects (Gilbert-Rolfe 51).

Spark overturns the structure of Joycean epiphanies by undermining the aesthetic perceiver’s superior position over the object, and giving back the physical elements to the disembodied individual. As if ridiculing Nick’s impression-based interpretations of the girls, Spark explores an alternative imagination to disturb the passive viewer’s self-complacent mind in a way that embodies a lively image of a woman, evoking eccentric feelings, both in Nick’s memory and the text itself. While Joyce’s protagonists gain a temporary catharsis through a sudden spiritual manifestation, Nick is not allowed to do so. Rather, Spark’s text ends on a disturbing image, leaving Nick “with a persistent image, beyond diminished literary style and Romantic hopes” (Hodgkins 147). It is Jane, barefoot but energetic like a peasant, whom Spark focalizes at the end:

Jane mumbled, “Well, I wouldn’t have missed it, really.” She had halted to pin up her strangling hair, and had a hair-pin in her mouth as she said it.

Nicholas marveled at her stamina, recalling her in this image years later in the country of his death—how she stood, sturdy and bare-legged on the dark grass, occupied with her hair—as if this was an image of all the May of Teck establishment in its meek, unselfconscious attitudes of poverty, long ago in 1945. (142)

On V. J. day, an anonymous seaman kisses Jane “passionately on the mouth” (141), and after receiving the random attack, she stops to replace a hairpin. This snapshot-like portrayal of Jane is reminiscent of Alfred Eisenstaedt’s famous photograph capturing an American sailor kissing a nurse in a white dress in Times Square on V. J. Day, August 14, 1945. Although it is not known whether Spark intended to react to Eisenstaedt’s picture, the concluding image in *Girls* implies Spark’s struggle to disturb the cultural construction of ideal beauty, characterized by complete composure and perfect balance, which seems little different from the fascist’s fascination with consensus. Rather than triggering the romantic sentiment that Eisenstaedt’s photography tends to evoke, the last image in *Girls* is calculated to mock the ideology of perfection, thereby achieving Spark’s aim to create “the art of ridicule,” an art condemning any action of violence while at once raising the sense of pleasure so that “everyone can share in some degree, given the world that we have” (“The Desegregation of Art,” 36). Significantly, the pictorial scene captures the flesh-image of the survival, and shifts the viewer’s focus from the queen of fashion, Selina, to the fattest woman, Jane, whose appetite was scrutinized under the rigid control of the May of Teck, rises as the life-affirming quality

that endows the character with a humanness. The institution views Jane's fatness as waste, but now her shame turns into victory.

The final image presents the ways in which Jane's sturdiness mocks social power and discipline, while Selina's slimness manifests her complete submission to the all-encompassing institution observing and regulating female bodies through the mythmaking of beauty in slimness, which drives the girls under the condition of constant hunger and undernourishment. Instead of absorbing ideological codes of beauty, Jane's body communicates her overflowing stamina and animation, which Ngai regards as important in order to destabilize the cultural stereotype of the aesthetic ideal. According to Ngai, the "exaggerated expressiveness" accompanying the subject's hyperactivity can restore one's liveliness, effusiveness, and spontaneity full of vigor and spirit against a stereotypical "dead image" or a "fossilized metaphor" scarcely providing a subject with "corporeal qualities" (94-95). Spark's ending image of Jane embodies the spontaneous transmission between the character's emotional energy and her body. If Selina's dress masks the human body, the untamable flesh-image of Jane portrays the dynamic interplay between body and spirit, food and energy, and power and action without disconnection. Subsequently, going beyond the institutional manipulation over the body, the kinesthetic image of Jane counters that the body stands as a medium for the expression of the social, an epistemological scheme taken by scholars such as Mary Douglas, who argues that "[w]hat is being carved in human flesh is an image of society" (116).

We may take an earlier scene into consideration to elaborate the significance of the concluding image. In the interim of the bomb-explosion, Jane runs into her room and “with animal instinct snatch[es] and gobble[s] a block of chocolate which remain[s] on her table” (118). Jane had to grapple with temptation to eat some pieces of chocolate she had hidden in her cupboard, and her appetite led her to feel guilt and blame—the consequences of the body-shaping culture in which eating fully means not only wasteful consumption but also cause for shame in particular because the kinetic act of eating collapses the ideal state of beauty, perfect poise and complete composure. As David Howes notes in *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (2003), across cultures the discourse on body aesthetics supposes that food consumption brings the opposite visual effects of “appearing beautifully” on the surface of the body (71). Yet, on the day of the fire, Jane gains renewed vitality from a chocolate bar and gets back to her friends to assist them in escaping from the burning building. Although Jane’s animal-like instinct in eating might seem a sign of her poor self-control, this scene suggests that such a surplus of appetite becomes the source of the liveliness apparent in our final sight of her.

Transgressing the aesthetic convention of obscuring human bodies, the vivid picture of Jane sets itself against the oppressive system’s fantasy of poise and proportion, and brings a subversive moment to the text. As a novelist, Spark could not but frame a character’s body within a textual form, an artist’s dilemma insofar as he or she wants to avoid confining aesthetic objects to narrow frames, but Spark’s embodiment of Jane’s overflowing power through her bodily image disturbs the longstanding cultural adoration

of poise and balance. By showing the subject's active corporeal site that denies being trimmed within a rigid frame, the picture of Jane ruptures the symbolic system attempting to generalize, totalize, and abstract an individual's substantial body. For example, Eisenstaedt's iconic snapshot, originally published in *Life* magazine, exhibits a perfect sense of balance and poise, which Spark may be caricaturing in her fiction. Recalling the seaman approaching the nurse, grabbing and kissing her, Eisenstaedt wrote in *The Eye of Eisenstaedt*, "Now if this girl hadn't been a nurse, if she'd been dressed dark clothes, I wouldn't have had a picture. The contrast between her white dress and the sailor's dark uniform gives the photograph its extra impact" (56). From Eisenstaedt's view, the nurse's white dress bestows a visionary blessing on his work because it constituted a sharp silhouette when juxtaposed with the opposite colored uniform. Along with the pure color contrast, he refers to the ideal height difference between the man and the woman in another book, *Eisenstaedt on Eisenstaedt*: "Only one is right, on account of the balance. In the others the emphasis is wrong — the sailor on the left side is either too small or too tall" (119).

In *Girls*, instead of beautifying such a street romance, Spark implies the unpleasantness of the man's random kiss through the picture of Jane that reveals what could be behind a fascinating appearance. Despite the criticism of Jane's fatness, Spark envisions Jane as a new icon of beauty with an assumption that her surplus energy may enliven the endless boredom and phlegmatic sentiments spread among decadent aesthetes like Nick. Earlier in the text, Spark's narrator describes the lethargic bohemian poets belonging to a poetry society: "Some, with many talents, faltered, in time, from

lack of stamina, gave up and took a job in advertising or publishing, detesting literary people above all” (62). Jane had a vague fancy for the decadent poets because of their dissident self-fashioning, but eventually she herself comes into textual focus by expressing her vigorous energy, which seems far more lovable than the poets’ sluggishness. The poets’ chronic lethargy is juxtaposed with Nick’s absence of proper action when he sees a seaman stabbing a woman on V. J. night. Noticing the dying woman, Nick tries “unsuccessfully to move his arm above the crowd to draw attention to the wounded woman,” but it is a mere “gesture” that cannot save the victim (141-42). Nick’s unproductive gesture devoid of moral action echoes the response of aesthetes, for example, the Symbolist poet Laurent Tailhade, who is said to aestheticize “a deadly anarchist bomb thrown into the French Chamber of Deputies in 1893: ‘What do the victims matter if the gesture is beautiful?’” (qtd. in Jay, *Force Fields*, 73).<sup>102</sup> Nick has no purposeful intention to beautify the crime on V. J. Day, but he is like the Symbolist poet involved with anarchist politics, not only because he glamorizes the “beautiful aspects of poverty” of the girls, but also because his seeming disinterestedness or indifference drives him to participate in the chilling scene as a nonchalant spectator without any meaningful resistance.

Creating a counterforce to the anarchist poet’s tepidness, Jane’s overflowing stamina ruptures Nick’s subjective imagination and defies his desire to possess the perceived. Although early Spark criticism highlighted Nick’s moral awakening at the

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<sup>102</sup> See Martin Jay, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (London: Routledge, 1993). In chapter six, “What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?”, Jay links anarchist and fascist politics in terms of their shared aestheticization of violence.

last moment, Nick remains recklessly narcissistic and ignorant, as the recurring picture of Jane still seems to him “an image of all the May of Teck establishment in its meek, unselfconscious attitudes poverty, long ago in 1945” (142). Despite Nick’s sentimental beautification of the girls, however, the eccentric image of Jane baffles him by inverting the hierarchy between the perceiver and the perceived. The captured moment refuses to be aptly framed into Nick’s perception habituated to adore the life-denial images such as Joanna’s sublime voice and Selina’s dress subsuming her real body.

The concluding image has recurred in Nick’s memory until his death in Haiti, whereas modernists’ epiphanies are evanescent so their visions melt into the air. The recurring image in *Girls* can be persistent and enduring because this specific picture seems less artificial than real. The modernists’ yearning for creating epiphanic moments has to do with their fear of death, as Franco Moretti notes in *The Way of the World*. Realizing how vulnerable human subjects are in front of the overwhelming trauma of World War I, modernists such as Joyce attempted to “redeem the meaninglessness of the past” through epiphanies, but the Joycean epiphany seems “only a passing moment” (241), although the moment of revelation provides the viewer with a temporary awakening. In Spark’s *Prime*, Brodie’s obsession with “the crème de la crème” also derives from the modernist’s fear of death. Aware that one’s life is short and one’s “prime” is elusive, Brodie yearns to contain the passing moment into an artificial form, and this aspiration leads inevitably to her painstaking beautification. In the same light, modernists’ epiphanies crystallize both the artist’s will-to-creation and their fear of death. In contrast with the modernists’ epiphanic vision accompanying a mood of compulsion,

the persistent image of Jane has little to do with an aesthetic subject's obsession with seizing the evanescent moment. Far from being artificial, the picture of Jane evokes a vital feeling, just as Jane herself exudes a hyper-energy for life.

Death results in a change in the mode of a relation between the perceiver and the perceived in modernist fictions. Tellingly, modernist novels tend to show that an artist struggles to grasp the true meaning of something external to the self in course of becoming an artist, but the desiring subject confronts a painful frustration deriving from the complexity of the perceived. Only after the biological death of the desired object does the perceiver approach it within the realm of memory, retrospectively decipher the meaning of the object, and discover the unprecedented artistic revelation in relation to the other. It is death that helps the perceiver to redefine the perceived through the play of involuntary memory, in which the now non-existent object no more troubles the subject to make painstaking efforts to comprehend the other. As Leo Bersani notes in *The Culture of Redemption* (1990), in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27) the loss of the grandmother enables the narrator to possess her, since "the living grandson sees an image of his grandmother contained within his own image; but her image—although it can now be nowhere but in him—no longer contains him" (8). The absence of the desired object also occurs to Lily Briscoe, a painter in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), in the course of acquiring the revelation of beauty. Drawing a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay with her son, Lily oscillates between her adoration of Mrs. Ramsay and resistance to her powerful influence, but years after Mrs. Ramsay dies, Lily perceives her "uncommunicative" ghost silently sitting "beside" her, and feels that she is



finding the core of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty (174-175). The relation with the dead lets the subject see the disturbing other transformed into a pleasing object, but *Girls* reverses the position between the perceiver and the perceived: it is the beauty of the living being that Spark engaged, so that the lethargic viewer is halted, and marvels at the ungraspable image before his own death.

Spark's illustration of Castle Rock in Edinburgh may shed a light on the eccentric beauty of Jane's physicality. In her 1962 essay "Edinburgh-Born," Spark recalls the moment when she viewed the scenery of Edinburgh through a window at a hotel room before her father's passing. Waiting for a call from the hospital, she came to appreciate the beauty of her hometown. At that time, she was drawn to the incongruous Castle Rock, "the primitive black crag rising up in the middle of populated streets of commerce, stately squares and winding closes, like the statement of an unmitigated fact preceded by 'nevertheless'" (22). In spite of its seeming ridiculousness, the protrusion of the archaic Castle Rock is one of the distinctive "physical features" of Edinburgh, imparting "the beautiful uniqueness" to the place (22). As Spark narrates the beauty of the Edinburgh landscape looked out the "window"; as a writer, whose status was identified with a "minor public servant," she was fully aware of the impossibility of escaping from encapsulation or framing: writing itself becomes a means to build a frame that confines the writer's generative imagination to the finite space of a book, as Jacques Derrida describes the reductive nature of a book in *Of Grammatology*, "[the] idea of the book is the idea of totality, finite or infinite, of the signifier" (18).

Nonetheless, Spark took the role of the artist paying attention to an invisible character and rediscovering the unique beauty in the figure. This image cannot but be encapsulated in the form of narrative but still expresses representational excess through the heroine's untamable body, the source of the unrepresentability of her beauty. Just as the Castle Rock appeared beautiful due to its incongruousness and rarely melted into air even after Spark woke up out of sweet contemplation, Spark's specific description of Jane's body conjures up the passion to be a person through whose life-affirming energy shines the beauty of a survivor, outstripping the codified image of static, pure, and perfect beauty. Refusing to be trapped in the conventional frame of female beauty, Jane's corporeal image breaks into Nick's memory as if it mocks his tendency of beautifying the May of Teck girls for his own pleasure.

### **Fear of the Crowd, Terror of Indifference**

The power of Spark's works lies in her encapsulation of the moment when a person's unique qualities are fully expressed; consequently, her texts urge readers to a deeper awareness of aspects of a person's distinctness such as bodily health and corporeal energy that are uncharted in the laws of beauty. Defying what became rigid codes of beauty, Spark unmask the ways in which standards of beauty inculcate the hierarchy of beauty and affect the way we see others. In particular, Spark's texts portray how an enclosed community discriminates against those who "fail" to internalize the social standards of beauty, adopting the familiar logic of Fascism. As discussed above, this is why Spark drew her special attention to Jane, a fat girl discriminated, monitored,

and marginalized in an insular society like the May of Teck Club. For example, among jubilant crowds gathering on V. J. day, Spark focalizes an anonymous figure so that her readers have a chance to reflect upon the character's singularity that had been unnoticed, belittled, or suppressed from the mainstream point of view.

Notwithstanding, it seems reductive to simply assert that Spark's fiction gives the social outcast a power by expressing her concealed beauty. Although Spark helps readers appreciate Jane's singularity through the snapshot at the end of the fiction, the writer does not seem much interested in subverting the power relationship between the privileged and the marginalized. If Spark had desired to do so, she might have made Jane a more reliable character whose "beautiful" uniqueness remains persistent throughout the narrative. However, Spark incorporates disturbing pictures that might possibly collapse our awareness of the character's beauty. Other than the snapshot of Jane on V. J. Day, readers may rarely find a degree of attractiveness in the character's action in *Girls*. Early in the fiction, told in flashbacks, we see Jane, now a columnist in 1963, contacting her former housemates to report the "martyring" of Nick on the phone: Jane appears as a gossiping woman whose shallowness seems to reverberate with her repeated statement—"I've got something to tell you." That Jane, spending much of her time doing the fraudulent "brainwork" in 1945, has scarcely changed might weaken such a view that the character rises as the new icon of beauty in Spark's fiction because her unique qualities, witnessed on V. J. Day, have not lasted to such an extent that are permanently belonging to her.

Can beautiful actions taken by Jane on a single day be worth remembering, if she “degenerates” into a “gossiping” woman? In fact, the fiction provides a set of opposed spaces such as the private vs. the public, and the individual vs. the crowd, which exist antagonistically and mutually, at times; for example, the May of Teck residents try to subvert the regulation of the institution as they seek for openness through the roof, though their liberation is offered within structure, while they comply with the tyrant rules of the system, more precisely, of the systematized notion of beauty. In this situation, if a character were constantly poised between resistance and submission, to what extent can we argue that Jane’s beauty has to do with her individual uniqueness against the order of the institution? If Spark went beyond just elevating the marginalized girl, who oscillates between power and resistance, what would be the fundamental significance of Spark’s embodiment of a person’s uniqueness in the postwar context? What desires might lead Spark to pay attention to an anonymous person, to single her out of the crowd, and to record her unique qualities that become visible even in the crowd?

To answer these questions, I propose that it is the role of an author and a reader Spark eventually stressed in terms of finding a person’s beautiful uniqueness. Put differently, Spark called for critical responsibilities for both an author and a reader, supposing that the interaction between these two parties would establish an alternative space independent from institutional manipulations. For Spark, a responsible author was neither a control freak nor an indifferent God-like artist paring his fingernails. Rather, Spark deemed an author to be a sensitive observer affectionately drawn to a character,

whether the character is lovable or detestable. Spark's *Girls* epitomizes this awareness. In *Girls*, what becomes more critical is not the beautiful quality itself encoded in the character, but the author's inscription of a person singled out of the crowd. This fiction intimates Spark's desire to capture the rare moment when a person is singled out of the crowd, and to embody the moment in the permanent space of a text so as to express the writer's ability of discovering and recording a person's singularity.

If an author needs to inscribe certain qualities of a character, according to Spark, a reader should critically and sympathetically respond to the author's effort to restore such beauty to a person because without partaking of this dynamic process, the reader would remain a passive spectator like Nick in *Girls*. Significantly, Spark's emphasis on a reader's role draws our attention to her complex feeling toward the sprawled crowd in the postwar milieu. Although Spark found positive aspects in the postwar crowd's vital energy, she was also concerned about the depersonalizing effects of the mass, who often emerged as unthinking, and indifferent spectators. For Spark, uncritical spectators seemed highly dangerous because it might signal the reemergence of the masses cheering political manipulators such as Hitler and Mussolini when they put themselves on display in the public milieu.

As I discussed above, during the interwar and war periods, the Nazis and the Fascists turned the public space into the theatrical stage to deceive the mass spectators. Transforming the political sphere into the theatrical stage, the dictators, who were in fact "eloquent speakers," cast themselves as good-looking actors by deploying theatrical props "such as insignia (badges and arms), dress (clothing and coiffure), demeanor (form

of greeting and poise) and rhetoric (form of address and formal discourse in general)” (Habermas 8).<sup>103</sup> It is needless to say that Spark detested such dictators’ deceptive strategies that appeared more or less “aesthetic,” rather than simply violent. What I hope to highlight is that Spark deplored the spectators’ absence of genuine resistance to the manipulators. As a writer who believed in the potential power of people whose inner strength would unsettle rigid ideologies of society, Spark regarded a spectator’s role as critical, no matter how minor it appears; however, the mass people in the wartime were deceived by the dictators’ superficial strategies, and so, to a large extent, it was their fault, too.

Spark’s *Girls*, among other fictions, posits the danger of transforming political spheres into theatrical stages, and then embodies her double feelings toward the postwar London crowds. While crowds in the public sphere look like no more than a host of uncritical spectators in collusion with the political actors’ pompous self-display, they rise as a force with potential to challenge the Nazi’s and Fascist’s theatricality by virtue of their unruly energies. Spark’s narrative engages these double aspects alike, thereby encouraging readers to speculate on the ways to resist political actors, and to participate in discovering the uniqueness of an individual who has fallen to the status of just another mass society.

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<sup>103</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Massachusetts: MIT P, 1989). Using examples such as “insignia,” “dress,” “demeanor” and “rhetoric,” Habermas speaks of the process of the aura-making by which a national figure endows himself with public authority, that is, lordship. The Emperors used such theatrical props for self-presentation.

To be precise, Spark found that political actors collapsed the boundary between reality and fiction, and in turn, such illusion-making triggered a hyper-sensationalism by which the spectators experienced the elation of their own emotions. By exclusively appealing to their emotions, the actors' theatrical tactics weakened the spectators' critical judgment, and put them in the prison of theatrical images. "Real" things are masked under images in fiction, and logically, we shall solve our predicament in recognizing the beauty of the "real." This is why Spark felt urgent to solve the confusion between reality and fiction in exploring the issue of discovering beauty.

To further elaborate Spark's anti-theatrical perspective, it seems helpful to relate Spark with Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and theater director making significant contributions to the modern theatrical production by challenging some of the ways that the Nazis trapped the spectators into the prison of sensations. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully analyze these two figures in parallel, our discussion of Spark in conversation with Brecht might enhance the uniqueness of Spark's reaction to the collapsed distinction between reality and fiction. On the one hand, Spark and Brecht shared an objection to the transformation of the real into the fictional, or the aestheticization of daily life, which predominately occurred in Fascism and Nazism. On the other hand, however, Spark's resistance to the aestheticization of politics let her reemphasize the aesthetic value of literature, while Brecht's defiance of it caused the way that utilizes arts for political purposes.

To be specific, in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Brecht refined and popularized a theatrical movement, called epic theatre, founded by a line of theater practitioners,

including Erwin Piscator, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. Seeking to innovate a new mode of theatre in order to facilitate a social revolution against capitalism, Brecht dissociated the modern epic theater from the conventional dramatic theater where an actor imitates a character, the stage represents the external world, and spectators are induced to completely immerse in sensations provoking the emotional catharsis that, in Brecht's view, wears down their capacity for action.<sup>104</sup> In opposition to the heightened emotion of melodrama, superficial spectacle and manipulative plots, Brecht's epic theater aimed to turn spectators into participants, arousing their capacity for action, in a way that incorporates a theatrical technique called "gestus," an effective mode of acting that an actor takes up to encapsulate the feelings of the character at one moment, briefly stopping the action.<sup>105</sup>

As declared by Brecht himself, one of the primary goals of the epic theatre is for the spectators to always be aware that they are watching a play: "[it] is most important

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<sup>104</sup> *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic* (1964), edited by John Willett. Brecht offers an effective table presenting the general differences between the dramatic and the epic theatre (37). The best-known technique of Brecht's epic theatre is the "alienation" (estrangement) effect: to make the familiar strange. Although the term "alienate" may conjure up images of separating one thing from another by building a wall, this is not the case. The A-effect takes "...the human social incidents to be portrayed and label[s] them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted..." (Willett 125). The purpose of this technique is to put the audience in a situation where they can reflect critically in a social context.

<sup>105</sup> It is said that the most famous "gestus" ever used was in Brecht's *Mother Courage* where the character of *Mother Courage* looks out to the audience, her face posed in a silent scream. The form of an epic play is episodic. Whereas the plays of Ibsen or Chekhov will construct scenes that relate directly to every other scene, Brecht's plays consist of a series of lone standing, loosely connected scenes. Scenes were often bookended with musical interludes, captions or gestures. These interludes allowed the audience to reflect critically on what they had just witnessed and also prevented feelings of empathy or the illusion of reality. See chapter 9, and p. 250 in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. Eds. Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).



that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre should be excluded from [epic theatre]: the engendering of illusion” (Brecht 122). Specifically, in the epic theatre actors serve as narrators and demonstrators: they retell events, and, in doing so, demonstrate actions and events that assist in the audience's understanding of the situation. Brecht had no intention to conceal the elements of theatrical production, such as lighting, music, scenery, costume changes, acting style, projections and any other devices, because he wanted to remind the spectators that they are in a theatre, and what they are watching is not real. In fact, Brecht’s distinction between reality and the theater came from his observations of Nazism’s and Fascism’s intrinsic theatricality in the interwar period. His essay “On the Theatricality of Fascism” dismisses the fascists’ process of transforming the political realm into a theatrical stage, which echoes Benjamin’s 1936 criticism of the aestheticization of political life under the fascist regime.<sup>106</sup>

Like Mussolini, Hitler has been notorious for his absurd actor-like pose on stage and his developments of theatrical tactics to produce his public appearance. Hitler, a theater enthusiast himself, used “sound trucks and posters to announce great meetings,” and combined “elements borrowed from circus, grand opera, and the church such as banners, march music, repetitious slogans, communal singing and repeated cries of

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<sup>106</sup> *Fascism: Critical Conceptions in Political Science* (2004), edited by Roger Griffin, and Matthew Feldman. Griffin examines Brecht and Benjamin in pair in terms of their anti-Fascism (Nazism). For the theme of Fascism, Nazism and theatricality, see: Roger Griffin, “Fascism and Culture: A Mosse-Centric Meta-Narrative (or how Fascist Studies Reinvented the Wheel),” one of the chapters in *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives* edited by António Costa Pinto in 2011; *Fascism and theatre: comparative studies on the aesthetics and politics of performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, edited by Gunter Berghaus; *Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture* (1990) by Sherree Owens Zalampas.

‘Heil’” (Zalampas 41).<sup>107</sup> By means of theatrical devices, Hitler was able to amplify his oratorical force, and his theatricality “electrified large audiences” (Zalampas 41). In his 1986 book *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen suggests that this historical phenomenon remained a great anxiety to Left German critiques in the postwar period: “Left German critiques of ‘Holocaust’ betray a fear of emotions and subjectivity which itself has to be understood historically as in part a legacy of the Third Reich. Precisely because Hitler was successful in exploiting emotions, instincts, and the ‘irrational,’ this whole sphere has in turn become deeply suspect to post-war generations” (95). As one of the Left German critiques, Brecht called for the renouncing of mimesis-oriented performances in the twentieth century, believing that reality requires “a new mode of representation” (Huyssen 102). In his attempt to avoid the negative effects of hyper-sensationalism, Brecht tried to bring in “[the] distance that enables the spectator to develop a rational understanding of phenomena rather than being engulfed in a stream of conflicting emotional identifications” (Huyssen 95, 102).

To some extent, Brecht’s objection to the confusion between the real and the fictional resonates in Spark’s works. Concerned about the collapsed boundary between the real and the fictional, in “The House of Fiction,” Spark explained to Kermode her distinction between truth and fiction:

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<sup>107</sup> See Sherree Owens Zalampas, *Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture, Art, and Music* (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular P, 1990). Steven F. Sage delves into the influence of Hitler’s taste for theater on his political styles. In his 2006 book, *Ibsen and Hitler: The Playwright, the Plagiarist, and the Plot for the Third Reich*, Sage assesses the impact Henrik Ibsen’s plays had on the development of Adolf Hitler’s Weltanschauung and place in history.

I don't claim that my novels are truth—I claim that they are fiction, out of which a kind of truth emerges. And I keep in my mind specifically that what I am writing is fiction because I am interested in truth—absolute truth—and I don't pretend that what I'm writing is more than an imaginative extension of the truth—something inventive. (quoted in Kermode's "Muriel Spark's House of Fiction," 31)<sup>108</sup>

It is true that Spark's books introduce "facts" as something "open to fantastic interpretation" (Bold 87), and Spark herself conceived of a character's confusion between fact and fantasy as an unavoidable process by which an artist figure grows into a mature writer. This feature is common to Caroline Rose, a novelist rearranging her circumstance in *The Comforters* (1957), January Marlow (*Robinson*), an author open to the idea that dreams might determine her destiny, Dougal Douglas (*The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, 1960), the creator of "a lot of cockeyed books" (142). Sandy Stranger, in *Prime*, composing a romantic fiction, conducting conversations with literary heroes such as Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. Fleur Talbot (*Loitering with Intent*, published in 1981), a novelist, also deliberately confuses fact with fiction. All these characters confuse fact with fantasy, constructing a world of their own making.<sup>109</sup> In this process, their

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<sup>108</sup> This is originally from "The House of Fiction: Interviews with Seven English Novelists," *Partisan Review* 30 (Spring 1963): p. 63. Jennifer Lynn Randisi borrowed this citation for her book, *On Her Way Rejoicing: The Fiction of Muriel Spark* (1991). According to Randisi, what Spark meant by "the absolute truth" is the divine truth—captivating her mind since her 1954 conversion to Catholicism.

<sup>109</sup> The characters accept events that are inexplicable. Spark's characters attempt to reason with the irrational and, when reason proves inadequate, accept that experience is not restricted to what is reasonable. This idea much owes to her Catholic belief. The result is a mysticism that upends the reader's sense of what is, for in Spark's novels, reason is itself an object of satire

“daemon” allows them to “[transfigure] the commonplace” (in Sandy Stranger’s phrase). For example, Fleur’s voice in *Loitering with Intent* renders Spark’s respect for an artist’s vision “more redolent of dream (or nightmare) than of prosaic reality” (Bold 87): “When people say that nothing happens in their lives I believe them. But you must understand that everything happens to an artist; time is always redeemed, nothing is lost and wonders never cease” (*Loitering with Intent*, 83).

Dealing with political subjects such as World War II, the rise of Fascism, and the crisis of capitalism and consumerism, however, Spark more seriously treats the deceptive mechanism deemed to produce a protagonist’s misperception of reality. As observed by Nick (in *Girls*), confusing images with something real, the plots of *The Public Image* (1968) and *Territorial Right* (1979) present a character’s precarious attempt to make appearance realities; Annabel Christopher, the actress in *The Public Image*, and Robert in *Territorial Right* who wants to be an art historian, fall into fragile and deceiving traps as a consequence of their own confusion between the real and the fictional and between other people’s lies and blackmail. *The Horthouse by the East River*, Spark’s war fiction, captures some of the “surrealistic, mysterious” qualities of the wartime (qtd. in Mackay 2010, 99).

Spark’s opposition to the confusion between reality and fantasy in the war period derives from her own experience of working at Woburn Abbey in a department of the Intelligence Service run by Sefton Delmer, a specialist in anti-Nazi propaganda, in 1944. As she recalls in her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, Spark’s duties involved the

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(Randisi 3). The novels they narrate are filled with “ideas of truth and wonder” (*Loitering with Intent*, 80).

presentation of fiction as fact. To produce convincingly German-sounding broadcasts, the unit employed devious means of gathering and manipulating information: bugging the prisoner of war camps for authentic-sounding idioms, reading the dead letters addressed by their families to missing German soldiers, and recruiting its personnel from prisoner of war camps. Despite the British government's intention to smash Hitler and the Nazis, "the all-too-historical likes and masquerades of wartime double-dealing," which created "antirealist fantasy" gave Spark a painful awareness of the underlying violence wrought by political manipulators, no matter which side they take (Mackay 2010, 100).

Spark's "The Desegregation of Art" (1970) elucidates her critique of the collapsed boundary between reality and fiction, detected in "a marvelous tradition of socially-conscious art" in the twentieth century, as well as in the political spectacles manipulated by Hitler and the Nazi during the 1930s. Like Brecht, Spark argues that hyper-sensationalism keeps readers from taking ethical responsibility for the sociopolitical issues they face. Echoing Brecht's objection to Aristotelian mimesis and its intended effect, empathy, Spark criticizes the way "the arts of drama and the novel" depend on "the representation of the victim against the oppressor," for this cannot achieve its end or improve "our lives any more": "the sympathies and the indignation" aroused by artworks engenders an illusion that the spectators' "moral responsibilities are sufficiently fulfilled by the emotions they have been induced to feel" (34-35). Spark subsequently ridicules Hitler's theatricality, as displayed on his political stage, and proposes the audience's adequate response to such masquerades:

We have all seen on the television those documentaries of the thirties and of the Second World War, where Hitler and his goose-stepping troops advance in their course of liberating, as they called it, some city, some country or other; we have seen the strutting and posturing of Mussolini. It looks like something out of comic opera to us. If the massed populations of those times and in those countries had been moved to break up into helpless laughter at the sight, those tyrants wouldn't have had a chance (35).

The political shows made by Mussolini and Hitler instigate repulsion in Spark because the arts of empathy and sentiment undermine “the mentality of the mocker” (“The Desegregation of Art,” 35) and paralyze the viewer’s understanding of the necessary distinction between fiction and reality. In Spark’s view, an artist’s attempt to produce strong sensations is analogous with Hitler’s or Mussolini’s political strategy, namely, their transformation of political life into a theatrical stage, which exploits the audience’s emotions. Thus, Spark shares the anti-sentimentalists’ perspective, like that of Brecht, in approaching to the works of art produced in the period ranging from the interwar period to the year of 1970 when she wrote “The Desegregation of Art.” Recognizing the limitations of works of art touching the suffering and pain of others, Spark distanced herself from a sentimentalist and proposed that artworks in her time must no longer be grounded in the transcendental. This is why Spark wanted to replace “the art and literature of sentiment and empathy” by “the arts of satire and of ridicule” producing in the audience “a helpless laughter” (35).

In her challenge of the sinister aestheticization of daily life, which also motivated Brecht to create his epic-theatre, Spark came to stress an “aesthetic” response to the political dictators’ theatrical poses: “laughing”— a non-aggressive reaction that a reader of fiction might display. In other words, as a means of resisting the logic of fascism, Spark argues that the audience’s “laughter” becomes the effective weapon of disturbing the totalitarian modes of dominance in everyday life. Spark’s emphasis on the audience’s laughter here is resonant with that of Mikhail Bakhtin, who explored the role of laughter in discourse, identifying laughter with polyglossia, or the multitude of languages.<sup>110</sup> According to Bakhtin, one of the greatest roles of laughter lies in liberating “consciousness from the power of language by freeing from the mind-molding power of metaphysics and axiological principles” (Patterson 8). Just as Bakhtin’s laughter intends to undermine monological formulas structuring dominant cultures and to disturb the hierarchical barrier between the self and the other, Sparkian laughter desires to attack authoritarian power, engaging in a sardonic mocking of violence in any kind of form.

In proposing laughter as a desirable response in the audience or readers exposed to the public scenes, Spark seems to believe that indignation (as well as indifference) may engender the same kind of violence found in the Nazis and Fascists, and that, as Bakhtin notes, laughter is a hearty power shaking the cold and unresponsive ground of

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<sup>110</sup> To examine the types of laughter in Bakhtin’s criticism, see his *Rabelais and His World* where he explores carnival laughter, called “a festive laughter,” which is not just an individual’s laughter but “the laughter of all people”— “gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding” (11-12). In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin suggests that laughter defeats the fear of death (196).

hierarchical institutions that have formed the law of discrimination. The latter point is where Spark breaks from Brecht, in particular. More precisely, Spark advocates the form of artworks “rich in Brechtian estrangement effects—effects that call attention to the constructedness of the fictional scenarios being portrayed in order to inhibit readerly immersion and promote instead a critical engagement with those situations and events” (Herman 5), but Spark’s art of ridicule goes beyond such illusion-breaking reflexivity, putting forward the sense of pleasure and humor. Rather than bearing ultra-serious modes in attacking the politicians’ sinister postures, the Sparkian art of ridicule underlines the value of laughter, an excessive form of emotional response, “essentially not an external but an interior form of truth” in that laughter rises from the belly, taking us from the surface to the substance of human being (*Rabelais*, 94).<sup>111</sup> Spark, after all, celebrates the power of an individual’s feeling, while addressing the need to renounce the art of strong emotion.

Spark’s recurring loyalty to the private self has to do with her double feeling toward the collective emerging as a new social force in her time. In contrast with Brecht, who maintained a high level of trust in the spectators’ intellectual capability for critical response to what they are seeing, Spark was less optimistic and more ambivalent toward the mass of the people.<sup>112</sup> For example, *Prime* mirrors Spark’s double feeling toward the collective by showing that the changing nature of collectivism afflicts Sandy Stranger, a

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<sup>111</sup> See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984).

<sup>112</sup> Brecht notes that “[the] one tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent. It is utterly wrong to treat people as simpletons when they are grown up at seventeen. I appeal to the reason” (14).



girl as adept as her teacher at weaving narratives around herself. During the class field trip to St Giles Cathedral, the Brodie girls are confronted with a number of unemployed people in Edinburgh, and the heightened disorder presented by them gives Sandy a sense of horror.

For Sandy, the people on the street appear as a formless “dragon’s body” (40), which reflects a poet’s deep-seated horror of the crowd, as I referred to the Romantic poet Wordsworth’s wariness of the crowd earlier in this chapter. The fact that the body of crowds appears as an amorphous group begets an overwhelming fear in the mind of a storyteller like Sandy whose basic aptitude lies in organizing a narrative frame: if the crowd’s amorphousness effaces the particulars in each individual, its disorder seems to bespeak the impossibility of organizing a coherent world, a narrative. At the age of ten, Sandy perpetually displaces Brodie as the heroine of her romantic love story about Miss Brodie’s Hugh (the teacher’s former lover), and her creation of the narrative, a “private” act, plays a role in her escape from Brodie’s world. Putting forward Sandy’s creation of the narrative as a comedic strategy destabilizing Brodie’s authority, Spark does not seem unsympathetic with Sandy’s dread of the crowd on the street. At the same time, however, *Prime* captures that Sandy’s fear of the strangers is linked to her bullying of her friend, Mary Macgregor:

But the snaky creature opposite started to shiver in the cold and made Sandy tremble again. She turned and said to Mary Macgregor who had brushed against her sleeve, “Stop pushing.”

“Mary, dear, you mustn’t push,” said Miss Brodie.

“I wasn’t pushing,” said Mary. (41)

In a sense, Spark empathetically represents Sandy’s desire for “the sense of system” that may rescue an artist “from the baseness of the arbitrary stroke, the touch without its reason,” to borrow Henry James’ phrase in the preface to *The Tragic Muse*.<sup>113</sup> Yet, Spark also implies that Sandy’s fear, in turn, scapegoats Mary as Brodie discriminates against her.

If Spark portrays an individual’s horror of strangers and its subsequent effects in *Prime, Girls*, set in 1945, marked by the end of the Second World War, illuminates more complex and dynamic relationships between an individual and the crowd of people. Three public events structure *Girls*: V. E Day (8 May 1945) early in the book, V. J Day (15 August 1945) at the end of the novel, and, in between, the general election, held on 5 July, with results declared on 26 July. As Martin Stannard records in *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (2010), the explosion and fire at the May of Teck club occur on 27 July, the day after the general election result which swept Labour to a victory (Spark herself voted Tory) and inaugurated a period of radical social reform.<sup>114</sup> A scene in the fiction represents the presence of a lot of Londoners gathering on the street, near Buckingham Palace, in order to celebrate the victory of Europe on V.E day:

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<sup>113</sup> Bradbury begins his discussion of Spark by citing this phrase at the beginning of “Muriel Spark’s Fingernails,” a chapter of *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (London: Oxford UP, 1973). On writer’s reactions to crowds, see Plotz, *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000).

<sup>114</sup> See Martin Stannard, *Muriel Spark: The Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010). In chapter 12, Stannard sketches the historical backdrop set in *Girls*.

They became members of a wave of the sea, they surged and sang until, at every half-hour interval, a light flooded the tiny distant balcony of the Palace and four small straight digits appeared upon it: the King, the Queen, and the two Princesses. The royal family raised their right arms, their hands fluttered as in a slight breeze, they were three candles in uniform and one in the recognizable fur-trimmed folds of the civilian queen in war-time. The huge organic murmur of the crowd, different from anything like the voice of animate matter but rather more a cataract or a geological disturbance, spread through the parks and along the Mall. . . The government reminded the public that it was still at war. (17)

Here are dramatic tensions between festival and violence, and the people and the authorities: the passage expresses the psychological fear of “the touch without reason” (in James’s words), but also embraces the hyper-sense of joy filling the public space on V. E day due to its democratic potential. The above scene implies that the collective people involuntarily form a subversive power against homogenizing authority, inviting a mode of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque or dialogic space, in which heterogeneous voices come to coexist and the inversion of social hierarchies takes place. In spite of the potential violence it may involve, the people’s “huge organic murmur” is free to move around the public space, flouting the government’s empty announcement—“it was still at war.” During the public celebration, the royal family stands as no more than the national symbol, rather than exercising any substantial power over the people. This scene intimates that the public space allows the people to gain the moment of liberation,

whereas the May of Teck, an insular realm governed by “a desirable order of life” (12), muffles an individual’s voice in oppressive ways. To represent this, *Girls* embeds a dramatic scene that portrays the voice of authority silences that of the girls. On the general election day, Winston Churchill’s voice interrupts Joanna, reading a poem, whose poetry recitation recorded on tape later gets erased for the club’s economic end.

In fact, many parts of *Girls* unmask the residents’ yearning for becoming democratic, radical or “modernized,” whatever lifestyles each of them sustains. Selina is fond of the French style fashions, “a high hoop-brimmed blue hat and shoes with high block wedges,” alleged for “symbols of the Resistance” (70); Jane longs to meet “young male poets in corduroy trousers and young female poets with waist-length hair” because their appearance carries a rebellious air (61); even the senior resident, Collie, reveals her secret yearning for being modernized: she feels “modern,” while talking about the usually tabooed subjects, “sex and getting married” (104). Comparing to the May of Teck, where the residents attempt to fulfill their yearning for modernity by resorting to fashions, speech acts and other theatrical tactics, the public space looks replete with the crowd’s lively, spontaneous and undefeated energies.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt encourages us to see publicness as a potentiality. She says, “wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever” (199). Because the potential character of publicness “precedes all formal constitution of the public realm. . . unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does now survive the actuality of the moment which brought it into being” (199). Justus Nieland draws on Arendt to account for positive potentials of the modern publicness. See *Feeling Modern: The Eccentricities of Public Life* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2008). In this book, Nieland sympathizes with Arendt: “there are several important implications of this elusive formulation. Because Arendt defines publicness as a performative political arena brought into at once noninstrumental and non-teleological” (15).

Attending to the collective people's vitality, however, Spark represents the horror of "the touch without reason" again at the end of the book. On V. J. day, "Jane, Nicholas and Rudi were suddenly in difficulties, being pressed by the crowds from all sides" (141). The narrator says: "'Keep your elbows out if possible,' Jane and Nicholas said to each other, almost simultaneously; but this was useless advice" (141). Indeed, one of the most unpleasant touches takes place when the seaman kisses Jane on the mouth: Jane "was at the mercy of his wet beery mouth until the crowd gave way, and then the three pressed a path to a slightly healthier spot, which access to the park" (141). Beyond the pleasant level of celebration, purposeless crimes happen in the chaotic crowd, and each one is busy with his or her affair, detached from the suffering of helpless victims. While a woman is stabbed to death by the seaman and other people are painfully screaming for unknown reasons, the crowd begins "to roar again" and "Rudi and Jane [are] busy yelling their cheers" (141).

Spark's portrayal of the irrational crowd might stem from her distrust of human nature, closely linked to her Christian belief in original sin, which makes her break apart from those who seem paralleled with her in terms of her anti-theatrical stance.<sup>116</sup> If

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<sup>116</sup> Peter Kemp's *Muriel Spark*, Allan Massie's *Muriel Spark*, and Ruth Whittaker's *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* are all extensive critical works discussing with great sensitivity Spark's religious outlook. Although most early critics exclusively focused on the theme of Spark's Catholicism, recent scholars tend to evade the subject or deny the influence of her religion on her works. For example, *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race, Deconstruction*, edited by MacQuillan, includes no contributor who regards Spark's Catholicism as important in establishing her aesthetic. MacQuillan calls Bradbury "the greatest sinner" for he referred to her as a "Catholic novelist" in "Muriel Spark's Fingernails" (1). Bran Nicol follows MacQuillan's. In "Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion," in *Muriel Spark*, edited by David Herman (2010), Nicol argues, "Spark's novels do not offer a sustained meditation on religion or spirituality (even though the topic of Catholicism crops up frequently.) God is not one of her 'themes' (112-113). Their claim has a premise that the teleological view is nothing but a stigma for a talented writer.

Brecht remained optimistic about a mutually interactive community where the spectators sincerely pay attention to the actors' gestures to understand the meaning of the performance, Spark contemplated a chilling side of the communal space.<sup>117</sup> Spark's novel embodies the unsympathetic world such as that of W. H. Auden's 1938 poem, "Musée des Beaux Art," in which a ploughman's ignorance of the fall of Icarus implies the universal indifference to the misfortune of others. In *Girls*, the public space turns into a precarious theatrical stage full of superficial "actors," rather than critical onlookers. Nick, for example, acts the role of a detached onlooker whose ineffectual gesture does not draw anyone's attention. From Spark's perspective, the plethora of theatrical gestures in the postwar public milieu appears sinister, in that putting events on display shares the same effects that Mussolini and Hitler engendered by means of their political performances. Collapsing the tension between the real and the fictional, the May of Teck imprisons the girls in spectral images.

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But for Spark, her Catholic belief became the great source of inspiration to be an artist. See her essay, "My Conversion," in which Spark explains how her conversion has encouraged her to be a psychologically free and independent writer. Gerard Carruthers points to the influence of Spark's Catholicism on her works. See his article, "Muriel Spark as Catholic Novelist" (2010). The most prominent amongst this line of scholars is Ruth Whittaker, the writer of *The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1982). Whittaker defines the universal theme found in Spark's oeuvre, ranging from her first published fiction, a short story called "The Seraph and the Zambesi" (1951) to *Loitering with Intent* (1981): "a tension between God's eternal status and man's temporal allegiances" (150).

<sup>117</sup> Putting forward the concept of the epic theatre, Brecht brought "the street scene" as a model. An incident occurring at any street corner (ex. a traffic accident) sets up a natural model for epic theatre because it contains theatrical elements such as plots, actors and spectators: "an eyewitness" plays like an actor, while demonstrating how the accident took place by acting "the behavior of driver or victim or both" to "a collection of people," that is, the "bystanders" identified with the spectators within an institutional theater (Brecht 121). Likewise, Brecht presupposed the reciprocal relationship between the actor (witness) and the spectators (bystanders), and the audience's will to understand the situation where the incident engendered a (or more than one) victim(s).

In attempting to destabilize increasingly invisible social manipulations over individuals in mass society, Spark cherishes the private space, a quiet realm where people can get a chance to “consider where they personally [stand] in the new order of things” after feeling “the urge, which some began to indulge, to insult each other, in order to prove something or to test their ground” (*Girls*, 18). For Spark, a literary text can serve as the pleasant quiet room, fundamentally private but subversive enough to unsettle a tendency toward manipulation either by politicians or by artists, rather than a purified aesthetic cloister. This awareness in fact amplifies the meaning of the snapshot of Jane in *Girls*: even if a person resides in the system of manipulation, an author can record the anonymous person’s distinctive qualities, and therefore, make visible the forgotten beauty of each individual.

In Spark’s fictions we recognize her desire to restore a beauty uncharted in the law of institutions. Spark pays attention to an anonymous person who stands in the crowd people, and singles the individual out of it. Yet, to do this, she needs to go near the chaotic crowd, engaging herself in the roar of people, no matter how disturbing it seems to an artist whose natural taste makes her pursue a solitary room. Without breathing the vital energy in the crowd, the writer might not also get access to the character like Jane, who embodies the new atmosphere of the postwar democracy. If the author made the moment of beauty permanent by capturing it in the text, it will be the reader who may respond to it with hearty laughter.

## CHAPTER IV

### SCATTERED BEAUTY: WORDS, SMELL, AND WOOLF

At the first reading the useful meaning, is conveyed; but soon, as we sit looking at the words, they shuffle, they change . . . .

- Virginia Woolf, 1937

In “Craftsmanship,” written for the BBC radio series “Words Fail Me,” and read in a broadcast on April 20, 1937, Virginia Woolf states that words “shuffle” and “change” at the very moment when we look at the words to grasp their meanings (*Collected Essays* II, 246).<sup>118</sup> Woolf identifies the intrinsic difficulty in controlling words, finding that words possess spontaneous power, thereby getting beyond a writer’s conscious craft. It is a writer’s dilemma Woolf was fully aware of by that time. On the one hand, writers yearn to put words in their control by exercising craftsmanship, the term she defines as “making useful objects out of solid matter” (*Collected Essays* II, 246), but in fact, words “hate being useful,” revealing “their power to tell the truth”: they express not “one simple statement but a thousand possibilities” (*Collected Essays* II, 247). Throughout her career, Woolf appreciated the masterpieces of William Shakespeare or Jane Austen, admiring their capability of removing unnecessary words and emotions, which might be attained by cultivating skills at limiting some “excess,” as she notes in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929). Despite her deep-seated fascination with the

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<sup>118</sup> See Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays*. Vol. II. (New York: Harcourt, 1967). A recording of Woolf’s reading of “Craftsmanship” survives in the National Sound Archives of the British Library.



mastery over words and emotions alike, however, Woolf could not but acknowledge the internal power of words unconstrained by the craft of a writer.

Woolf's surrender to the power of words constructs a refreshing call for undermining the doctrine that a great writer should get rid of any verbal and emotional residue or surplus in production of works of art. What I mean by this is that many of Woolf's contemporaries insisted on complete fitness between signs and referents, forms and contents, or manners and matters. They also figured the artwork that retains a "perfect" fitness by means of the image of a crystal or a jewel, characterized by solidity, transparency and purity. For those who adhered to the "crystalline" beauty, exercising "craft" seemed essential in order to achieve seamless refinement for an artwork. Yet, because words are rebellious, always getting beyond the craftsman's will-to-mastery, these writers could not but be frustrated with their project to keep words under their control; however, the more despair they felt, the more struggle they had. By conscious craft, poets like Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, among others, attempted to seize the fleeting words, images, and emotions in an instant moment, and to contain them within a crystalline frame; to do this, they sought to extract the essence of words, while getting rid of verbal "surpluses."

The spontaneous force of words, expressed in the works of Woolf, was deemed to undermine the craftsman's obsession with a crystalline art that constantly demands conscious management of words. Although Woolf was attracted to crystalline works of art in her pursuit of a purified moment and a perfect form of fiction, she realized that craftsmen's mastery over words tends to prohibit them from perceiving the intrinsic

freedom of words, which refuse to be made economical or useful (*Collected Essays* II, 247). Woolf found that the making of a crystalline work might involve a self-oriented and utilitarian approach to words in the sense that the process requires the elimination of ostensibly ineffectual signs, and the transformation of original manuscripts, which one might notice within the capitalist economic system that requires the minimization of waste and the reuse of products. Seeking to resuscitate the untainted nature of words, Woolf thought that the anti-utilitarian qualities of words can challenge the way of manipulating a work of art, and of making it a “clean” site devoid of any “waste”—the formidable enemy in a utilitarian culture. Just as words desire to move here and here, Woolf wanted words to be scattered, often suspending herself from compulsive craft. Such a gesture came from her discontent with the utilitarian mastery over words, and her desire to taste the beauty of words, including “word-residues”—meaning surplus verbal signs seemingly “unproductive” to create aesthetic perfection or complete organization. Whereas other craftsmen sought to remove such “residues” that seem ineffective in production of a crystalline work, Woolf embraced them, even if the words appear as “wastes” at times, because the elimination of the seeming residues conceals the core of the beauty in words.

The 1938 short fiction “The Duchess and the Jeweller” consummates this awareness. The story presents jewels as the material embodiment of a craftsman’s crystalline work of art, frequently involving a notion that beauty always goes hand in hand with refinement. Representing the valorization of jewels, this story unfolds the writer’s double feelings toward crystalline works of art. While the text implies the

writer's life-long fascination with gem-like moments, likened to crystalline artworks, it establishes the repository of chaotic and overflowing words, which refuse to be fixed upon a solid frame of art. In other words, "The Duchess and the Jeweller" embodies the aesthetic space where words express their spontaneous power and freedom: words not only enter the visual world, but penetrate into the non-visual realm through the mind's eye and nose. The aesthetic terrain, in turn, revitalizes the writer's longstanding question about to what extent a craftsman may want to control verbal signs in compositional processes.

Only a few scholars have discussed "The Duchess and the Jeweller" since it was published in 1938.<sup>119</sup> The story has been away from critical focus largely because the text does not partake of the experimental narrative devices Woolf's fictions commonly present, and it is conceived as an Anti-Semitic piece of work. Finding "offensive" racial connotations such as "Jewish" noses in "The Duchess and the Jeweller," critics such as Lara Trubowitz and Kate Krueger Henderson tend to either neglect this work or accuse Woolf of being a blatant anti-Semite.<sup>120</sup> These readers might argue that "The Duchess and the Jeweller" is at odds with other works of Woolf, who attacked fascism in her

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<sup>119</sup> Studies on Woolf's short fiction little touch on "The Duchess and the Jeweller." Dean R. Baldwin's *Virginia Woolf: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1989), and Heather Levy's *The Servants of Desire in Virginia Woolf's Shorter Fiction* (2010) omit the 1938 story.

<sup>120</sup> See Lara Trubowitz, "Concealing Leonard's Nose: Virginia Woolf, Modernist Antisemitism, and the Jeweller," in which Trubowitz describes "The Duchess and the Jeweller" as Woolf's "only published piece fully devoted to a Jewish character" (275); Kate Krueger Henderson, "Fashioning Anti-Semitism: Virginia Woolf's 'The Duchess and The Jeweller' and the Readers of Harper's Bazaar." Drawing on Woolf's "anti-Semitism," Henderson insists that Woolf's "depiction of Oliver Bacon is undeniably anti-Semitic, and [her] production of an anti-Semitic portrayal of a Jew cannot be overlooked, excused, or ignored, whatever her intent (3).

*Three Guineas*, which was simultaneous in date of composition and publication to the short story.<sup>121</sup>

In my opinion, however, “The Duchess and the Jeweller” presents the pervasiveness of Woolf’s anti-imperialism and her antagonism against war, while simultaneously revealing the writer’s achievement as an aesthete exploring the beauty of words themselves, rather than using them for other purposes.<sup>122</sup> Unlike those who assert that Woolf turned away from her journey to beauty in reaction to the rise of fascism during the 1930s, referred to as “the dirty decade” by literary scholars (McNeillie 19), I intend to scrutinize Woolf’s persistent commitment to beauty, more precisely, the intrinsic beauty of words. My assumption is that the beauty of words remained Woolf’s supreme concern, but her notion of beauty undertakes the espousal of word-residues whose intrinsic freedom threatens the crystalline mode of beauty.

This chapter highlights the way the 1938 work couples words with smell. As they bear affinities, I examine words and smell in combination. In “The Duchess and the Jeweller” Woolf places the main character’s “sharp nose” at the center of the narrative, and her focus on the nose helps to explicate how smell and words go together. This

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<sup>121</sup> Laura María Lojo Rodríguez points to the critical reception of Woolf’s 1938 story in her article “Contradiction and ambivalence: Virginia Woolf and the aesthetic experience in ‘The Duchess and the Jeweller’” (2001). Rodríguez is one of the few writers who read “The Duchess and the Jeweller” in the context of British aestheticism. Commercialism and aestheticism are two axes in this article. Concentrating on the jewel imagery that structures the narrative, Rodríguez draws on the seeming opposite poles: “art for art’s sake” doctrine versus the material commodity of beauty.

<sup>122</sup> That Woolf was an aesthete engendered critics’ patronizing view of her. In Jane Goldman’s words, Woolf was a naïve and untutored modernist when she was obsessed by interior, subjective and mystical experience. See Jane Goldman, “Modernist Studies,” in *Palgrave Advances in Virginia Woolf Studies*, ed. Anna Snaith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 39.

story, while combining words with smell, poses jewels, the epitome of crystalline perfection, against the flexible realm of words and smell. Whereas other critics tend to see Woolf's presentation of the nose as her racist allusion to the Jewish stereotype, here I argue that the stress on Oliver's nose reflects on the invisible world with which words, and smell are coming into contact. For Woolf, both words and smell have been controlled, removed, suppressed, or aestheticized in various realms of society, but their rebellious power keeps frustrating those who attempt to manipulate them. In a challenge of their will-to-mastery, Woolf explored the secret space of words through "smelling" their traces. Considering words and smell in pairs, this chapter examines some manipulators of words and smell in the context of the early twentieth century. Their overconfidence of controlling words and smell is indeed undermined in her 1938 story, where Woolf develops an analogy between the freedom of words and the rebelliousness of smell. By exposing the convergence of words and smell, this chapter shows that, despite her attraction to the crystalline beauty of art, Woolf's writing embraces unproductive words, tapping their secret terrain; consequently, the chamber of words opens up, discharging their non-visible impressions.

### **Solid Jewels, Scattered Words**

Many of Woolf's writings present jewels as aesthetic objects emblematic of spiritual values such as beauty, love, eternity and purity: if their transparent color seems to mirror heaven, their hard texture appears to contain such invisible values protecting them from external influences. Embodying beauty, goodness and truth, jewels draw

aesthetic sentiments from the viewers, touching their eyes, and calling for words of admiration. For example, Woolf's 1927 novel *To the Lighthouse* uses a ruby image in a moment of epiphany that Mrs. Ramsay invents in her dinner party. At the cost of Mrs. Ramsay's effort to harmonize all separate guests, a gem-like moment is created: "there is a coherence in things, a stability; something... is immune from change and shines out. . . in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby" (*To the Lighthouse*, 107). Mrs. Ramsay's moment seems to invent an enduring form, analogous to a ruby that is solid, stable and immune from the flux of time and physical decay. In *To the Lighthouse* an image of jewel is given to the moment when Mrs. Ramsay's love and self-sacrifice creates perfect harmony. This epiphanic moment ingrains an exceptionally memorable spot of time, exemplifying Woolf's model of a "pattern" hidden "behind the cotton wool" discussed in her 1939 essay "A Sketch of the Past" (*Moments of Being*, 72).

In her memoir "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf describes a "pattern" or an "order" that exists behind the amorphous "cotton wool" of common life, and the pattern manifests itself in the perceived world through certain kinds of artworks or something made analogous to works of art.<sup>123</sup> The revelation of the pattern creates a sense of wholeness, and the wholeness "take[s] away the pain," rendering "a great delight to put the severed parts together" in Woolf's account (*Moments of Being*, 72). Mrs. Ramsay's

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<sup>123</sup> Woolf notes in "A Sketch of the Past" that the moment of unity can create the same effect a work of art brings:

. . . that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is not Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock. (72)

gem-like moment enables the concealed “pattern” to emerge on the visible surface<sup>124</sup>; consequently, those who partake of this special moment are bestowed with the healing power that serves to tie all separate individuals. Paralleled with a jewel, the instantaneous moment Mrs. Ramsay invents in her dinner party appears as a perfect work of art that makes the hidden togetherness visible, manifesting the artistic gift of the creator. Fusing spiritual virtues by means of her labor, Mrs. Ramsay engenders the magic moment, identified with a “crystal” that is made a permanent moment. This is why Rose Ramsay becomes the heir of Mrs. Ramsay’s expectations when she chooses her mother’s necklace, while Minta Doyle, one of the guests of the Ramsays, laments the loss of her grandmother’s brooch, which hints at the loss of spiritual legacy held by the earlier generation.<sup>125</sup>

The late Victorian art critic Walter Pater, one of the crucial major influences on Woolf, used a crystal and a “hard” gem as the recurrent tropes in expounding his aesthetic vision.<sup>126</sup> Pater’s conception of the gem-like flame, which means an instant of

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<sup>124</sup> Laura Marcus focuses on the dimension of surface and depth represented in Woolf’s fictions. See a chapter titled “A Shape That Fits” in her book *Virginia Woolf*, first published 1997 (Horndon: Northcote House P, 2004). Marcus approves of Woolf’s emphasis on depth, although she might appear to privilege the surface over the depth, as she turned to the post-impressionistic aesthetic. For Marcus, Woolf’s numerous essays and novels invariably present metaphors of depth, however. She argues, “[a]t times creativity is conceptualized in ‘subterranean’ terms—caves, inner chambers, the ocean floor—suggestive of a depth psychology” (2004; 28).

<sup>125</sup> “A Sketch of the Past” also records the moment of choosing the mother’s jewelry: “There were none of those snatched moments that were so amusing and for some reason so soothing and yet exciting when one ran downstairs to dinner arm in arm with mother; or chose the jewels she was to wear” (*Moments of Being*, 94-95).

<sup>126</sup> My understanding of Woolf’s engagement with Pater’s aesthetic notion is indebted to Perry Meisel’s study. See Perry Meisel, *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater* (New

vision concentrating numerous ideas, might become the embryo of Woolf's epiphanic moment, an instantaneous but solid moment capturing myriad impressions. In the Conclusion to his 1873 book *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, Pater foreshadows the relevant principles of Woolf's aesthetic, such as impressionism and the moment of being, by which she privileged subjective perceptions while striving to fix passing impressions upon an enduring form. Forestalling Woolf's "incessant shower of myriad atoms" introduced in her famous essay "Modern Fiction" (1919), Pater remarks in the Conclusion, "each object is loosed into a group of impressions — colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer" (154). Meanwhile, Pater exposes his desire to capture the "unstable" and "flickering" impressions when he speaks of the creation of the "hard, gem-like flame": "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world" (154). Pater's statement in *The Renaissance*, then, underlines two kinds of necessities in creating works of art: a subjective reception of flowing impressions and a constant and unending process of

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Haven: Yale UP, 1980). Meisel's book seeks to trace close affinities between Woolf's aesthetic and Pater's. For Woolf, she first read Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* in her father Stephen's library, but did not mention Pater's influence at all. Meisel assumes that Woolf's silence on the subject of Pater stemmed from her desire to eschew the father figure, largely triggered by her difficult relations with her father, Leslie Stephen (xiii). Harold Bloom also views Pater as one of the most significant precursors for what we call modernists. In the introduction to *Walter Pater* (1985), Bloom seems to identify Pater with an implicit father of major modernists. Bloom addresses Pater's influence "not only on Stevens and Yeats, but on Joyce, Eliot and Pound, and many other writers of our century, we need to place Pater in his Oedipal context in the cultural situation of his own time" (3).



formation, which might appear as “the form of formlessness” distinguished from “a paradigm of the closed form” (Iser 19).<sup>127</sup>

The vision of Pater’s hard, gem-like flame permeates a wide range of Woolf’s writings, acting as a stimulus in the formation of her ideas of art and beauty (McNeillie 2). Echoing Pater’s trope of the crystalline moment, a number of Woolf’s essays, letters, diaries and fictions expose her desire to produce a gem-like hard writing. While privileging the flux of impressions, Woolf also desired to organize the fleeting impressions. Woolf’s letter to Clive Bell on 19 August, 1908 records her yearning to create seamless structures: “I think a great deal of my future, and settle what book I am to write, how I shall re-form the novel and capture multitudes of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole, and shape infinite strange shapes” (*Letters I*, 356).<sup>128</sup> In a diary entry written on January 26, 1920, the time when she began writing her first experimental novel *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf records her desire to make the novel “enclose everything, everything”; starting on the early drafts of this novel, she wrote in her notebook, “Let us suppose that the Room will hold it together”(qtd. in Mott, iii).<sup>129</sup> Here Woolf shows herself an heir of the earlier aesthete Pater, who admired such Renaissance artists as Leonardo Da Vinci, among others, for he appears to enclose all kinds of worldviews in the constrained forms or artworks.

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<sup>127</sup> See Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

<sup>128</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. I. Eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth P, 1975).

<sup>129</sup> Quoted from the Note to *Jacob’s Room* (New York: Dover, 1998), edited by Glenn Mott.

Like Pater whose aesthetic priority was in fusing everything in a hard, gem-like intensive moment, Woolf attempted to create, from the earliest period of her career, a sort of “dense” work, capturing evanescent impressions in a solid form. Pater’s aesthetic notions, founding “English aestheticism” in the 1890s, “certainly acted as a stimulant in the formation of Woolf’s ideas of art and beauty” (McNeillie 2). Reminiscent of Pater’s images of jewels, Woolf renders Mrs. Ramsay’s epiphanic moment through the image of ruby, an enduring form that seals spiritual virtues all together.

Similarly, in her letter to Ethel Smyth on 16 Oct. 1930, Woolf exposes her self-satisfaction with her short story “The Unwritten Novel,” writing that the story showed her “how [she] could embody all [her] deposit of experience in a shape that fitted it” (*Letters* IV, 231). By the time Woolf wrote her 1931 novel *The Waves*, she recorded her desire to produce a crystalline product again in a diary: “I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don’t belong to the moment. . .” (*A Writer’s Diary*, 139). Another telling example of Woolf’s attraction to a gem-like product is recognized in a character’s speech in her short story “The Evening Party” (1920). In a conversation with a friend of hers, the character confides her infantile fancy of “a solid ball of crystal,” evoking the Paterian vision of “an instant of vision” in which “a thousand experiences” are concentrated (*Renaissance*, 72).<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Pater attributes these qualities particularly to the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford: World’s Classics, 1980). Pater says, “The

Don't you remember in early childhood, when, in play or talk, as one stepped across the puddle or reached the window on the landing, some imperceptible shock froze the universe to a solid ball of crystal which one held for a moment—I have some mystical belief that all time past and future too, the tears and powdered ashes of generations clotted to a ball; then we were absolute and entire; nothing then was excluded; that was certainty. (99)

As perceived in the speaker's fascination with the solid ball of crystal, Woolf advocated the Paterian philosophy of a "perfect" work of art, partly regarding the intensive crystallization as a source of euphoria. Her "A Sketch of the Past" reflects this attraction to a solid moment, while attending to her question about how words press down whole ideas of the world: "[i]t is only by putting it into words that I make it whole" (*Moments of Being*, 72).

Woolf was as interested in a crystalline product as Pater, but she felt ambivalent toward Pater's aesthetic ideal. To be precise, as Perry Meisel notes in his study of Woolf and Pater, Pater's notion of crystalline arts stemmed from his aversion to any residue of words and emotions. Pater assumes that the removal of any residue of words and emotions must precede the production of a crystalline art. In *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style* (1889), Pater emphasizes the need to fire out or burn away any "surplusage" in the process of aesthetic refinement, which can be analogous with a sort

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science of that age was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas, seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences" (70).

of chemical combustion (10). From Pater's view, the strength of a poet lies in fusing all heterogamous elements, casting off any waste, residue, surplusage, or debris.

In *The Renaissance*, as I suggested above, Pater praises Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and other artists, Sandro Botticelli and Pico Della Mirandola, considering that these artists purified all waste in a way that would fuse contradictions in the production of artworks. Pater argues in *The Renaissance*: Michelangelo "sums up [. . .] the whole character of medieval art itself" (51); Da Vinci invents the fusion of beauty and disgust; Mirandola reconciles Christianity with the pagan religion of ancient Greece; Botticelli blends "the charm of story and sentiment, the medium of the art of poetry, with the charm of line and colour, the medium of abstract painting" (38). The advantage of these artists, according to Pater, springs from their effort to amalgamate heterogeneous elements in artworks, in which form and content, or manner and matter, come to perfectly fit together.

What Pater pursued in art was a pure crystalline production in which heterogeneous elements are melted together without leaving any debris. In the Preface to *The Renaissance* Pater argues for the need to combust residues:

Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all *débris*, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down

it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the stanzas on *Resolution and Independence*, or the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood*, sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there. . . . (3)

For Pater, the escape from “all debris” seemed the most critical sign of a poet’s craftsmanship. This is why Pater only partially appreciated the poetry of William Wordsworth, an English Romantic poet who celebrated the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling.<sup>131</sup> Pater found Wordsworth scattering litter here and there, failing to fire out the residue of words and emotions. Rather than cleaning up the debris, Wordsworth left it in his writing, which makes his works appear less purified and less mature in Pater’s view. Other than *The Renaissance*, Pater contemplates Wordsworth’s aesthetic “weakness” in *Appreciations*, arguing that “For nowhere is there so perplexed a mixture as in Wordsworth’s own poetry. . . And those who wish to understand his influence, and experience his peculiar savour, must bear with patience the presence of an alien element in Wordsworth’s work, which never coalesced with what is really delightful in it, nor underwent his special power” (*Appreciations*, 414). For Pater, the transparent or crystalline product devoid of all “alien” elements meant the great achievement of craftsmen who underwent a chemical process of labor, combusting impurities, and finally making pure refinement. Pater uses the image of a fine crystal in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life” (154).

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<sup>131</sup> See the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems by Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, first published in 1798.

In a sense, for Woolf as for Pater, the escape from residues might indicate the culmination of artistic genius. Reminiscent of Pater's depiction of the purified crystal, Woolf's imagination of "putting 'it all in'" tends to come with "leaving the residue 'out'" (Meisel 77). If Pater undervalues Wordsworth's poetry due to his leftover words, in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf criticizes Charlotte Brontë for her failure in combusting her emotional residue, anger. In the same light, Woolf's essay "Phases of Fiction" (1929) displays her dissatisfaction with George Eliot's emotional residue, employing the Paterian term "surplus": "The surplus of thought and feeling has been created in George Eliot, to cloud and darken her page, has been used up in the characters of Dickens" (*Collected Essays* II, 88). Meanwhile, this essay offers Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* as an example of a "crystalline" work that perfectly burns out the writer's personal emotion without any residue of anger. For Woolf, Emily Brontë's genius comes from her capability of deepening and controlling "the wild, stormy atmosphere of the whole book," *Wuthering Heights*, in which Emily Brontë's "emotion has not overflowed and risen up independently" in characterizing Heathcliff and Catherine who appear to "contain all the poetry that Emily Brontë herself feels without effort" (*Collected Essays* II, 96).

Although a series of Woolf's writings reflect the writer's fascination with the solid, intensive, and gem-like product, however, "The Duchess and the Jeweller" reveals her skepticism toward a crystalline product, intimating that the process of crystallization involves the suppression of the vital power of words and sense. The short story creates an intriguing terrain, Oliver Bacon's private room hoarding six steel safes in which he

keeps sumptuous jewels, signifying the crystalline products Woolf had adored for a long time:

He twisted a key; unlocked one; then another. Each was lined with a pad of deep crimson velvet; in each lay jewels—bracelets, necklaces, rings, tiaras, ducal coronets; loose stones in glass shells; rubies, emeralds, pearls, diamonds. All safe, shining, cool, yet burning, eternally, with their own compressed light.

“Tears!” said Oliver, looking at the pearls.

“Heart’s blood!” he said, looking at the rubies.

“Gunpowder!” he continued, rattling the diamonds so that they flashed and blazed. “Gunpowder enough to blow up Mayfair—sky high, high, high!” He threw his head back and made a sound like a horse neighing as he said it. (250)

Having their “compressed light,” Oliver’s jewels, “all safe, shining, cool, yet burning,” attend aesthetic and semiotic features. To some extent, the jewels partake of the familiar conjunction between jewels and crystalline artworks. The flaming sight of the jewels reaches Oliver’s eyes, captivates him, and stirs him to express his adoration by praising their beauty through words. In this sense, Oliver’s safes hoard both money and words: his jewelry is for sale, but as an aesthetic object, each of the jewels triggers a poem.

Oliver’s production of words raises key questions. Like a poet, Oliver assigns a symbolic sign to each of the jewels: “Tears,” “Heart’s blood,” and “Gunpowder.” At a glance, the pearls, the rubies, and the diamonds appear to gain proper signs matched with

their visual qualities. But what does Oliver mean by his phrase “Gunpowder enough to blow up Mayfair”? Why did Woolf include the queer image that attends Oliver’s horse-like gesture and sound? One might argue that Oliver damages his poem by including the disturbing sentence, while Woolf produced surplusage by adding the incongruent phrase misrepresenting the image of the jewels. In my opinion, Woolf might intend to scatter debris alongside the jewels to intimate the spontaneous power of words attempting to rupture the solid frame of the crystalline product.

That Oliver is the richest jeweler implies that he has successfully adapted himself to the profit-driven culture, but his use of words seems at odds with his economic way of life. Woolf illustrates the ways in which Oliver wastes and even “tastes” words, instead of simply taking prescribed meanings of the signs. Oliver’s speeches often include fragments, murmurs and repetitions, all of which mirror the characteristics of children’s infantile verbalization. The narrator points out Oliver’s habit of repeating verbal fragments, a kind of word-residue: “‘So,’ said Oliver Bacon, rising and stretching his legs. ‘So. . . .’”; “‘So, he half signed, half snorted, ‘so. . . .’” (249, 250). Oliver not only scatters words here and there, but he also tastes them. When the Duchess of Lambourne, who wants to sell her faux pearls to pay off her gambling debts, calls Oliver “old friend,” Oliver repeats her words “old friend” “as if he licked the words” (252).

At a glance, it might appear puzzling to grasp out what it means for Oliver to repeat the Duchess’s word “old friend” as if he tasted the word. Yet, Oliver’s verbalization seems to express the spontaneous power of words that flow from the speaker’s lips, which gets beyond the speaker’s will-to-mastery over words. To clarify



this point, it is important to note that Woolf juxtaposes two modes of speech acts in the text: the Duchess's purpose-driven speech and Oliver's purposeless repetition of words. The Duchess calls Oliver "old friend" with her intention to sell her false pearls by an exorbitant price, which embodies a way to "use" words for a utilitarian purpose. Inadequate to react to the Duchess's intention to manipulate him, Oliver proceeds to litter word-residues, but in fact, the ineffectiveness of his rhetoric renders a discreet subversion that liberates words from a speaker's practical use of them.

That words are scattered without purpose proves that their wild spontaneity is key to "The Craftsmanship," in which Woolf remarks that words "hate being useful; they hate making money; they hate being lectured about in public (*Collected Essays* II, 250). As "the wildest, freest, most irresponsible, most unteachable of all things," words reveal their power to those who "pin them down to one meaning, their useful meaning," abhorring "anything that stamps them with one meaning or confines them to one attitude, for it is their nature to change" (*Collected Essays* II, 249, 251). For Woolf, what becomes desirable in approaching words is "to think and to feel" words "before [we] use them," and to recognize that each sign leads to another, begetting a proliferation of meanings (*Collected Essays* II, 250). Taking the non-utilitarian approach to words into account, the 1938 short story embodies what Woolf considers an anti-protagonist against words: the text portrays the purpose-driven speech of the Duchess for whom words retain no more than a use-value. On the contrary, Oliver "tastes" the words spilled out of the Duchess's lips, no matter what she intends to achieve through her speech. It seems that Oliver subtly defies the speaker's intention to meet her utilitarian goal

through words in a way to ruminate proliferating meanings of “the old friend,” rather than adopting the typical pattern of utilizing words.

Oliver’s play with words without purpose parallels Septimus Warren Smith in Woolf’s 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. The difference between Septimus and others is perceived when he and a crowd watch an airplane making smoke letters in the sky. Others try to formulate a meaningful sign from the letters to draw a precise meaning: “‘Glaxo,’ said Mrs. Coates. . . . ‘Kreemo,’ murmured Mrs. Bletchley. . . . ‘It’s toffee,’ murmured Mr. Bowley” (20-21). Yet, Septimus thinks, “they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes. . .” (21). Instead of attaching prescribed linguistic signs to the smoke letters, Septimus shifts “signification into sensuousness” (Mao 1998; 48), reading the words as an index apart from any didactic purpose except that of beauty. As Douglas Mao notes in *Solid Objects* (1998), a few paragraphs later Septimus similarly fixes upon the music of spoken language rather than the meanings of the sounds uttered:

“K. . . R. . .” said the nursemaid, and Septimus heard her say “Kay Arr” close to his ear, deeply, softly, like a mellow organ, but with a roughness in her voice like a grasshopper’s, which rasped his spine deliciously and sent running up into his brain waves of sound which, concussing, broke.  
(22)

Septimus inverts the paradigm of signification through his tendency to see words as aesthetic objects that generate “useless” beauty and pleasure away from the focus in the

conventional system of language. What Septimus primarily perceives from the smoke letters is not the meaning of words but their beauty, which is the quality felt not by a purposeful action but by non-utilitarian reflection.<sup>132</sup>

Oliver does not go the exactly same path Septimus took in *Mrs. Dalloway*. While Septimus, often cited as a study of shell shock, experiences the utter collapse of the subjective self, Oliver holds a kind of solid identity, internalizing the utilitarian system of commodity culture. Oliver cuts both ways: as the richest jeweler, he is eager to hoard his material properties by which he willfully constricts his self-identity, adapting himself to the marketplace, and relishing the fact that he is the most affluent jeweler in England. Nevertheless, Oliver's play with words recalls that of Septimus whose approach to words remain far less practical and utilitarian than purposeless and aesthetic.

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<sup>132</sup> Many readers associated Septimus' fragments with the essential symptom of the traumatized modern subject. Maria DiBattista is among the first critics to insist that Septimus incoherent narrative results from trauma and mental illness. See DiBattista, *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980). For recent discussion of Septimus' relation with words and the shock of war trauma, see Karen DeMeester, "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obstacles to Postwar Recovery in *Mrs. Dalloway*" in *Virginia Woolf and Trauma: Embodied Texts*. Eds. Suzette Henke and David Eberly (New York: Pace UP, 2007) 77-93. DeMeester argues, although Septimus' "inability to feel begins before the end of the war, it is perpetuated and exacerbated by his inability to find meaning either in his war experiences or in his suffering during and after those experiences" (82). DeMeester sees Septimus' fragments as his "inability" to comprehend signs, ascribing such a symptom to the war trauma. Reading Septimus' scattered words, Clifford E. Wulfman, in "Woolf and the Discourse of Trauma: The Little Language of *The Waves*," notes "the dark message" inhering not "in the meaning of the words but in their beauty—in their quality with which and by which they impinge on consciousness" (161). Wulfman suggests that the fragmented form, which looks beautiful to Septimus, carries "undecodable, traumatic secrete" about the First World War (161).

### **The Better Craftsman, a Foe of Words**

Woolf espouses scattered words in her 1938 short story, despite her deep-seated fascination with a gem-like work that epitomizes the culmination of aesthetic refinement. This point can be examined alongside her 1938 essay *Three Guineas*, published when she wrote “The Duchess and the Jeweller.” The subject of scattered words is resurgent in *Three Guineas*, a book-length response to an imagined letter sent from an educated gentleman who asked her about how to prevent war. Today’s readers of Woolf tend to read *Three Guineas* as her radical turn from her primary concern “art for art’s sake” to political activism with the rise of fascism during the 1930s, noting that this essay traces the origin of fascism: the essay finds the seed of fascism in the Victorian patriarchy.

Regarding *Three Guineas* as Woolf’s political manifesto, this reading insists that the book presents Woolf’s turn from her “quest for aesthetic experiments predominantly found in her earlier novels such as *Jacob’s Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and other major works.”<sup>133</sup> Jane Goldman, Kathy J. Phillips, and Laura Marcus, among others, have pointed to the haunting presence of a critique of empire in *Three Guineas*, reading the book as a social satire that relentlessly attacks imperialism and patriarchy. Goldman, for instance, argues that *Three Guineas* proves a much more political text than Woolf’s earlier essay *A Room of One’s Own*, “centered in literary criticism, analyzing and

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<sup>133</sup> *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*, edited by Mark Hussey (New York: Syracuse UP, 1991), was significant in opening up this field. See Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf Against Empire* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1994); Jane Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006); Laura Marcus, “Woolf’s Feminism and Feminism’s Woolf,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010): 142-79.

probing the production of literature by and about women” (2006; 110).<sup>134</sup> More often than not, the issues raised by *Three Guineas* seem to indicate Woolf’s break from her pursuit of beauty, which was sought for in her “highbrow” and “aesthetic” society, the Bloomsbury group, often conceived as being hedonistic, frivolous and snobbish.<sup>135</sup>

Against the increasing threat of war and fascism, *Three Guineas* attacks gender discrimination, war, and fascism, arguing that the affiliation of the fascistic Empire with the patriarchal Victorian family became the catalyst for war. *Three Guineas*, nevertheless, treats the subject of aesthetic styles with particular significance: it includes subtle allusions to structures of works of art, which raises the issue of beauty and art captivating Woolf since beginning her career. The style of the book itself, in fact, was made to answer the man’s question—how to prevent war: Woolf imagined that this late reply would be a strategy to end war. Adopting a lengthy and discursive epistolary form,

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<sup>134</sup> See Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006). Goldman traces Woolf’s focus on to politics in the 1930s. What Goldman assumes is that the 1930s became the critical period for Woolf to broaden her political viewpoint. To demonstrate Woolf’s political struggle in this decade, Goldman refers to her travels to France, Italy, and Holland where she spent “an unnerving three days in Nazi” (22). Goldman mentions Woolf’s 1935 involvement “in preparations for an antifascist exhibition in London, and in November of that year the Cambridge Anti-Fascist exhibition, in Soho Square, duly documented the rising threat of fascism” (23). Pointing to *Three Guineas*, Marcus similarly argues that Woolf played as a feminist in the 1930s in “Woolf’s Feminism and Feminism’s Woolf,” a chapter of *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010) 142-79.

<sup>135</sup> Raymond Williams has most accurately described the Bloomsbury members as a dissenting “fraction” of the upper class, a civilizing fashion. See especially a chapter titled “The Bloomsbury Faction,” in Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980): 148-69. Christine Froula’s *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Colombia UP, 2005) examines Bloomsbury’s responses to political events and outbreaks of violence in the interwar period. According to Froula, Bloomsbury continued to “fight against barbarism within”: Bloomsbury resisted “both any refined, positivist notion of ‘knowledge’ and any postmodern reduction to a totalizing belief in ‘Progress—Science—Reason—Truth’” (4).

Woolf opens *Three Guineas* with her defense of why she has left the educated man's letter unanswered for three years: "Three years is a long time to leave a letter unanswered, and your letter has been lying without an answer even longer than that. I had hoped that it would answer itself, or that other people would answer it for me" (3). This opening suggests that Woolf left the letter unanswered not simply due to the complex nature of his question, but for her belief that the unmaking of the ideology of "efficient" communication might erode a disposition towards war. Tellingly, Woolf saw the spirit of war from the culture in which the hyper-efficiency was privileged. In *Three Guineas* Woolf suggests the ideology of efficiency as an element to generate "a disposition towards war" in a way that ingrains aggression, fear and vanity in human minds (21).

The delayed reply to the educated man's letter, therefore, provides an anti-fascistic device, challenging the disposition towards war, and discouraging the educated man's presumption that he would receive some prescribed answers to his question. The narrator foils this man's expectation for an efficient communication, not only delaying her reply but also making her letter lengthy and discursive. Woolf reinforces this point at the end of her writing: "Now, since you are pressed for time, let me make an end; apologizing three times over to the three of you, first for the for the length of this letter, second for the smallness of the contribution, and thirdly for writing at all" (*Three Guineas*, 144). As Woolf's sarcastic ending implies, the discursive style of *Three Guineas* aims to erode the willed ambition of the man who wants to extract clear and quick answers from the receiver.

Here is one notable sign that alludes to opposite modes of artworks: a solid work of art and a flexible one. In her reaction to the educated man's question—how to prevent war— Woolf proposes the need to build a woman's college, an experimental institution that pursues learning for learning's sake: "Let us then found this new college; this poor college; in which learning is sought for itself; where advertisement is abolished; and there are no degrees; and lectures are not given, and sermons are not preached, and the old poisoned vanities and parades which breed competition and jealousy. . . (*Three Guineas*, 35). Woolf's suggestion of building the experimental college seems to reflect how she conceives of the nature of words in "Craftsmanship." If "Craftsmanship" underscores the non-utilitarian nature of words, *Three Guineas* provides a way to protect words from being contaminated with a practical use of them. What is remarkable is that Woolf's depiction of the new woman's college evokes a frame for a work of art, not a "crystalline" artifact but a loosely shaped frame: "Let it be built on lines of its own. It must be built not of carved stone and stained glass, but so some cheap, easily combustible material which does not hoard dust and perpetrate traditions" (*Three Guineas*, 33). This experimental college is set up with flexible and elastic materials, rather than such hard ones as carved stone or stained glass, which implies a solid crystalline work of art.

The architectural frame of the new college alludes to what Woolf pictures as a form of literature, a rather loosely framed work of art that might not appeal to the taste of educated men, but would be conducive to prevent war, as Woolf believes the "profession of literature" to be a powerful strategy against war (*Three Guineas*, 97).

According to her, through learning literature without didactic purpose, and rendering a sense of freedom to an artwork, we can protect “culture and intellectual liberty,” which has been “prostituted” by the desire to utilize words (*Three Guineas*, 85, 97). Such an intention to preach with words, for instance, results in distorting truths. For Woolf, “believing in art”—isolated from any didactic purpose—can be coupled with “not believing in war,” as she states in *Three Guineas*: “In short, if newspapers were written by people whose sole object in writing was to tell the truth about politics and the truth about art we should not believe in war, and we should believe in art” (97).

Although “The Duchess and the Jeweller” does not directly refer to the political context of the late 1930s, it is replete with Woolf’s aversion to the disposition towards war. The story suggests that Woolf attacked a disposition towards war by linking the spirit of fighting with the ambition to eliminate word-residues. In the face of Hitler’s aggression, Woolf intended “to show and resist the kind of ‘thinking’ that is encouraged by ‘fighting’ by appropriating the strategies of war” (Walkowitz 99). As an aesthete whose top priority was to explore beauty and art, Woolf resisted dictators’ dramatic tyranny through inventing aesthetic scenes that demonstrate her espousal of the multiple modes of beauty in words. The scenes of beauty in fact serve as alternatives to the march of ordered presence, displayed in the troops of the fascist and Hitler, and in the work of some modernists, so-called craftsmen, whose preoccupation with order and wholeness might be implicitly compared to that of the aggressive politicians.

The conception of a purified, and “clean” artwork became predominant among the writers who directly or indirectly supported Fascism in the context of the 1930, as was



proven in the case of Ezra Pound. From Woolf's view, it was not coincidental that a poet who idealizes a crystalline artwork could also advocate war and fascism, because the making of a crystalline work tends to involve a disposition towards war. A purified work might result from "fighting" against words in the compositional process: Woolf saw the mastery over words as the exaggerated self-conviction of an artist, which seems inseparable from the war-disposition she accounts for in *Three Guineas*. In other words, the production of a hard, and clean writing involves the task of purifying words, and this process of hyper refinement accompanies the artist's constant manipulation of words. Fighting against words, the artist must put the words under his control in order to invent a crystalline product. Woolf perceived that an artist's willed-ambition towards a clean and solid work often coincided with dictators' will-to-purification in the 1930s, the historical moment of Hitler's aggression and genocidal tyranny.

Among Woolf's contemporaries, the modernist poet Ezra Pound expressed extreme hostility to an excess of words: Pound saw excess in the system of art and economy as corrupting. In the circle of European poets during the early twentieth century, Pound became one of the most willful writers who strove to eliminate any waste of words to invent a clean, precise, and gem-like hard writing: needless to say, Pound might hate the way Oliver scatters words in Woolf's 1938 work. Pound's *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), originally written for lectures on Romance literature given in London, shows his early idea about poetry. In this book, Pound defines poetry as "a sort of mathematics, gives us equations, no for abstract figures. . . but equations for the human

emotions” (*Spirit of Romance*, 14).<sup>136</sup> As Nadel observes, Pound’s aesthetic reflects his focus on “the particular and the need for the definite, whether in terminology or imagery” (Nadel 2005 xii). Pound’s statements display his penchant for restraint, “which drives the master toward intensity” (*Spirit of Romance*, 18), reflecting his intention to eliminate word-residues for a crystalline artwork.

One might perceive close affinities between Pound and the earlier aesthete Pater in terms of their desire for removing word-residues.<sup>137</sup> As I suggested above, Pater’s criticism on Wordsworth looks like unfailing evidence of his to will-to-purification over the surplus of words. This link between Pater and Pound could align Woolf with Pound again, in that Pater’s notion of beauty considerably influenced Woolf. Undeniably, Pater’s dictum of the purified crystal lingers in Pound’s works and his poetic principle, Imagism, offered in 1912, spoke in favor of the following rules: (1) direct treatment of the ‘thing,’ whether subjective or objective, (2) to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation, (3) as regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not the sequence of the metronome—which was influenced by the anti-Romantic idea of T. E. Hulme who wrote that “beauty may be in small dry things. . . the great aim is accurate, precise and definite description” (qtd. in

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<sup>136</sup> *The Sprit of Romance* helps to understand Pound’s early poetry through its references, history, and detail, as well as its aesthetic. Pound’s ideal poet was Dante whose language was deemed to be “more beautifully definite” and “a cathedral” while Shakespeare is “a forest” (*Spirit of Romance*, 158,159).

<sup>137</sup> For a recent comprehensive study of Pater and Pound, see Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce, Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001).

Nadel, 26).<sup>138</sup> Pound's description of Imagism identifies an image as "a unification of disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time" (Frank 11).

Echoing Pater's idea of precise fitness and the purgation of all debris, Pound's Imagism insists on a systematic coherence between sign and referent through the elimination of the abstract from his poetry. Calling for minimalism, Pound attempted to castigate discursive language, sentimental symbols, and vague words. Pound's most famous Imagist poem "In a Station of the Metro" (1911) crystallizes the idea of cutting direct: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough." Tim Armstrong pinpoints Pound's aesthetic by this time: "For Ezra Pound in the era of Imagism, the 'efficient' poem was 'hard and 'clear,' it avoided unnecessary words. . . and it aimed for a 'concentration' which enabled an instantaneous reception which Pound often modeled on the electromagnetic impulse" (162-63).<sup>139</sup>

However, the difference between Pound and Pater goes deeper when it comes to their attitude toward an artist's role: the distinction in turn suggests where Woolf departs from Pound. What seems "missing" in Pater, though predominant in Pound, is the illusion of an artist's infinite-self, which seemed to Pound the source of redeeming society. If Pound expected an artist's will-to-power to transform the whole system of art and life alike, Pater distrusted the infinite self, or the absolute power of an individual.

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<sup>138</sup> See Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968) 3; T. E. Hulme wrote this in "Romanticism and Classicism," *Speculations*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge, 1936) 126-27.

<sup>139</sup> See Tim Armstrong, "Technology: 'Multiplied Man'," collected in *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. David Bradshaw (Malden: Blackwell, 2003).

As critics have pointed out, Pater's discussion of impressionism displays his emphasis on an artist's susceptibility. Michael H. Whitworth says, "[i]n the Paterian world, the 'susceptibility' to impressions exhibited by *Mrs. Dalloway*'s Peter Walsh is a positive virtue, bringing the perceiver close to reality" (114). For Pater, as he himself remarks in *Appreciations*, modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the relative spirit in place of the absolute, and to the modern spirit anything of "the absoluteness" or "orthodox" is eroded (Bucknell 39). Pater saw that the ideal critic depends not on a system but on susceptibility. In the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, Pater implies the need to surrender an artist's subjectivity to the existences outside the observer such as light and sound: "Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us" (152).

Pater's gem-like flame characterizes itself as an "intensive" and "hard" moment, but in Pater's view, such an epiphanic moment partakes of a romantic tradition that emphasizes the mysterious fusion of different components. Rather than privileging an artist's action to invent such a moment, Pater highlighted the reception of impressions when he described the gem-like flame. Pater's *The Renaissance* treats the invention of a gem-like moment as if it were a magical play: "But when reflexion begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic" (153). Pater immediately shifts his focus to an observer's limited capability of capturing impressions, "unstable, flickering, inconsistent": "each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in solidity

with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent” (*Renaissance*, 153). Although Pater finds the subject’s consciousness significant when he states that the impressions “burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them,” he also points to “the narrow chamber of the individual mind” where “the whole scope of observation” cannot but be “dwarfed” (*Renaissance*, 153).

Wolfgang Iser’s reading of Pater interprets his impressionism as the aesthetic of espousal: “Impression is all-embracing, and for Pater is a branch of knowledge itself” (Iser 36). In Pater’s aesthetic that underlines an observer’s susceptibility, the idealization of will-to-mastery is destabilized. Brad Bucknell brings up the same point in his study of Pater and Pound. Separating Pater from the tradition in which an artist assumes the role of a social reformer, Bucknell says, Pater was “uninterested in the Shelleyan idea of the poet who participates in ‘the eternal, the infinite and the one’” (39). Bucknell’s discussion of Pater illuminates his role of prefiguring modern relativism in art, which is predicated upon the flexible notion of beauty and the collapsed doctrine of progress. For Bucknell, Pater refused “any predeterminations of absolute criteria for the beautiful,” striving to figure out “what any given moment of beauty might be within the confines of a much less “universalized” idea of subjective space” (39). Harold Bloom traces Pater’s romantic tendency in his idea of purgation, or purification of form. Bloom quotes Pater’s passage about the origin of artistic form from the Postscript to *Appreciations*: “There are the born romanticists, who start with an original, untried matter, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work” (qtd. in Bloom, 2). As Bloom observes, in Pater’s view romantic artists can

create a crystalline product by working “the vividness and heat of their conception” (qtd. in Bloom, 2). Pater conceived of crystalline works of art as “the reward of the aesthete or perceptive man” (Bloom 2), rather than any other medium that might be utilized for sociopolitical promotions.

Pound’s inexhaustible pursuit of a clean and pure product exposes a marked separation from Pater’s. In course of establishing his early notion of Imagism, Pound took a role as a willful craftsman, and such a tendency betrays his exaggerated ambition to control words. Pound’s penchant for precision, concentration and purification was linked to his burning desire to eliminate word-residues or surplusage in poetic manuscripts, editing and paring from his own drafts and others’. This process required superb craftsmanship from Pound. In pursuit of a refined work devoid of all debris, Pound revised his early works, renewing former structures of poetic expression. Pound’s “In a Station of Metro,” inspired by the crowds in the Metro at La Concorde in Paris in 1911, came from his struggle to encode the precise moment when accurate signs for the referent occurred to him (Nadel 47-48). Pound “originally wrote a thirty-line Metro poem but collapsed it six months later “to refashion” the work: he made “a poem half that length,” and “a year later formulated into” the poem of two lines (Nadel 47-48). In *Early Writings*, Pound says, “In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective” (286).

Pound’s emphasis on conscious craft let him encourage T. S. Eliot to cut a large part of the manuscript *The Waste Land* (1922), which Eliot dedicated to him “it miglior

fabbro,” the better craftsman, citing Dante’s praise of Arnaut Daniel in *Purgatorio*, Canto 26. Meanwhile, Pound viewed William Butler Yeats’s diction as vague, abstract and clumsy, so much that he suggested Yeats clarify his diction. Pound saw Yeats “as remaining at heart a symbolist, always gesturing beyond surface, language, or concreteness, whereas for Pound the route his own generation took toward modernism ran though Imagism as a way station” (Bornstein 28).<sup>140</sup> The works of Pound and Eliot, therefore, tend to manifest “a perceptible framework around which the seemingly disconnected passages of the poem can be organized” (Frank 13).

As Pound’s conscious craft insinuates, Pound overrated a poet’s ability to control words, and openly adopted a system of power and energy as his poetic principle, Vorticism, invented in 1915 and succeeding his 1912 Imagism. By Vorticism, Pound meant to establish “an intensive art” that invokes expressionism, neo-cubism, and imagism” in one camp and “futurism in the other” (*Early Writings*, 287).<sup>141</sup> Pound unfolds the implication of an intensive art: “[o]ne desires the most intense, for certain forms of expression are “more intense” than others. They are more dynamic. I do not

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<sup>140</sup> George Bornstein, “Pound and the Making of Modernism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*. Ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999): 22-42. To Pound’s advice, Yeats told Lady Gregory that Pound’s criticism was a great help to him, enabling him “to get back to “the definite and the concrete away from modern abstractions.” Pound’s role as a foreign editor of Poetry magazine beginning in 1912 allowed him to be more related with Yeats. After assuming his post, Pound urged that the magazine establish his own credentials by printing some of Yeats’s work at once. Upon soliciting the poems from Yeats in October 1912, he could not resist changing Yeats’s wording in three cases. Pound deleted “as it were” from “Once walked a thing that seemed as it were a burning cloud” from “Fallen Majesty,” changed “or the” to “nor with” in “Nor mouth with kissing or the wine unwet” in “The Mountain Tomb,” and “he” to “him” in “Nor he, the best labourer, dead” in “To a Child Dancing upon the Shore” (Bornstein 25).

<sup>141</sup> *Ezra Pound: Early Writings: Poems and Prose* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

mean they are more emphatic, or that they are yelled louder. I can explain my meaning best by mathematics ” (*Early Writings*, 287). To clarify what he means by “an intensive art,” Pound characterizes the vorticist art as mathematics, which calls for ultimate accuracy and precision, already proposed for the system of Imagism. Pound also distinguishes his Vorticism from impressionist art:

There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man: firstly, you may think of him as that toward which perception moves, as the toy of circumstance, as the plastic substance *receiving* impressions; secondly, you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as *conceiving* instead of merely reflecting and observing. . . . (*Early Writings*, 287)

Inventing the idea of Vorticism, Pound’s essential step was to tell apart it from impressionism, the art of reception, contemplation and observation in his understanding. Pound considered Vorticism the latter kind of art demanding a “certain fluid force against circumstance,” which presents the poet’s objection to impressionism and his self-imposed obligation to go against a given circumstance by virtue of his will-to-power.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> In his 1925 essay on Vorticism, Pound deliberately distanced himself from the Italian futurist F. T. Marinetti, attacking Futurism as a descendent from impressionism, “a spreading, or surface art, as opposed to Vorticism, which is intensive,” though he terms Futurist arts as “a kind of accelerated impressionism” for its heavy dependence on speed (*Early Writings*, 287). Despite his conscious separation from Marinetti, Pound shared with the Fascist poet Marinetti. Marinetti, one of the first affiliates of the Italian Fascist Party, realized that for language to flourish, it must be cut direct, avoiding an expression of aimlessness. Towards the new language that should usurp the place of the old, in his 1912 Futurist manifesto, Marinetti proposed that the core of artistic matter lie in “courage, will power, and absolute force,” and “it belongs entirely to the intuitive poet who can free himself from traditional, heavy, limited syntax that is stuck in the ground, armless and wingless, being merely intelligent” (88). Marinetti’s manifesto suggests a method to achieve the innovative style in art: “Just as aerial speed has multiplied our knowledge



Pound's denigration of impressionism, which allows for the excess of impressions, distinguishes him sharply from Pater and Woolf, both of whom saw the receptivity to impressions as the primary condition of the self, and arts. In her most frequently quoted essay "Modern Fiction" (1919), Woolf wrote, "the mind receives an incessant shower of innumerable atoms" or "myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel" (*Collected Essays* II, 106). Such impressions, coming "from all sides" on "any given day," cannot be completely ruled by an artist (*Collected Essays* II, 106).

While Pater and Woolf are linked through their emphasis on susceptibility in reaction to external impressions, Pound betrayed his contempt for such passivity in favor of the radical actions by which he expected to remove any sign of "oldness" in works of art. Refusing any passive attitude toward words, Pound willingly undertook the role of the craftsman who can manage words through his skill at cutting "all debris," thereby achieving unprecedented newness in the realm of art and culture. Michael Levenson accurately remarks that Pound's pursuit of newness presupposes the power of "individual will," (1984; 135),<sup>143</sup> in that his idea of newness ceaselessly demands the renewal of manuscripts by means of an artist's rigorous energy and will-to-power.<sup>144</sup>

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of the world, the perception of analogy becomes ever more natural for man. One must suppress the *like*, the *as*, the *so*, the *similar to*" (85). Marinetti's voice echoes Pound's "cut-direct" principle, while also evoking the word-debris "so" scattered by Oliver in "The Duchess and the Jeweller."

<sup>143</sup> See Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

<sup>144</sup> Sanford Schwartz argues that Pound's obsession with newness is similar to Nietzsche's ideology of will-to-power: "Will to power is the production of forms that express no underlying

For Pound, who desired to galvanize readers by eliminating any superfluous word, a poet appeared as a heroic reformer able to correct any excess in various levels. While calling for “cutting direct,” Pound expanded the role of an artist, presuming to be “a literary activist who insists that ideas be put into action” (Nadel x).

Taking a heroic position as a cultural reformer, Pound considered the value of a crystalline product to an artist’s sheer status as “human” success, rather than to his or her “aesthetic” achievement. Idealizing crystalline works of art, Pound saw those who achieve such a condition of art as superior to others. He called these “superior” poets “a crystal man,” capable of redeeming society from corruptions, and identified them with “a vision” (Bloom 3). For Pound, the cleanness, and hardness of an artwork seemed a sign of the highest achievements as a human being. Michael Bell criticizes Pound’s precarious connection between aesthetic achievement and a successful life. What Pound believed is that “if your language is sloppy and inaccurate, emotionally as well as intellectually, so is your reality” (Bell 2003; 70).<sup>145</sup>

Collapsing the distinction between art and other realms of society, during the 1930s Pound took on the role of both artist and cultural reformer. To eradicate any form of excess, Pound directed words towards precision and accuracy, and his hatred of “word-residues” also drove him to attack the “vagueness of political rhetoric” and

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unity, the perpetual creation of new modes of life that manifest no universal principle, the ceaseless play of differences without ultimate identity” (38). See Schwartz, *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985).

<sup>145</sup> See Michael Bell, “Nietzscheanism: ‘The Superman and the All-Too-Human’,” a chapter of *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, edited by David Bradshaw (Malden: Blackwell, 2003) 56-74.

“usury in the world finance” (Coats 81). In *Jefferson and/ or Mussolini* (1935), Pound declares that “London stank of decay back before 1914 and I have recorded the feel of it in a poem here and there” (48). Believing himself to cure “the stench of decay” emanating from London, he wrote in the same book, “I am a flat-chested highbrow. I can ‘cure’ the whole trouble simply by criticism of style. Oh, can I? Yes. I have been saying so for some time” (17). The critic Robert von Hallberg is right when he argues in an essay titled “Libertarian Imagism” (1995) that Pound sought after “the irresponsible authority of beauty” in pursuit of hyper accuracy (75).<sup>146</sup> Orienting toward radical minimalism and anti-conventionalism, Pound thought that strict word-management would “revolutionize” the entire system of waste prevailing the world, including inflationary money and lending interest (Coats 81). For Pound, “precision and economy combine with ambition and pedagogy” (Coats 86), whereas in the world of Woolf and Pater, willed ambition prohibits artists from capturing the visionary moments.

The shape of a novel, Woolf considered, must be fitted to what it represents, and she explored perfect forms exactly matching their contents. Unlike Pound, who expanded his will-to-power to invent a crystalline product, however, Woolf rejected the elevation of the self. Woolf often put forward the model of aesthetic fitness, as a matter of fact, but her taste of the stylistic fitness had less to do her ambition to control over unruly and disruptive words than her intention to efface a writer’s self-assertion from his

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<sup>146</sup> Given Pound saw that the “economic” style of arts would transform the structure of economy, he seems to adopt Fascism’s “aestheticization” of the political. This idea might modify Paul Morrison’s argument in *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996): “Now Ezra Pound would hardly seem guilty of this aestheticization of the political. On the contrary, he is most frequently accused of contaminating his poetics with a great deal of economic nonsense” (Morrison 9).

or her work. In other words, Woolf considered an “excess” of a writer’s subjectivity a main factor that risks of deforming texts. Laura Marcus observes this point in “A Shape That Fits,” a chapter of her 2004 books:

Woolf could also be hostile to an ‘excess’ of subjectivity. Hence her oddly unsympathetic responses to Charlotte Bronte in *A Room of One’s Own*, in which Bronte’s desire is said to exceed the text’s shape, and her valorizations of Shakespeare (repeated throughout her work), whose life was wholly ‘consumed’ by his work, leaving ‘no foreign matter unconsumed,’ and who neither offered his auditors and readers ‘autobiography’ nor generated any need for it. (38-39)

The aesthetic fitness that Woolf longed to achieve was predicated on the shrinking of the self, which seemed to be perfected in the works of Shakespeare. For Woolf, the avoidance of excess, whether in words or emotion, rarely goes with an artist’s willed ambition. Rather, it meant “an act of self-extinction, a subsuming of self into the work of art” (Marcus 2004; 39).

As Hermione Lee points out in her biography *Virginia Woolf* (1999), Woolf detested the twin qualities, will and power. Hoping to escape from will-to-power, Woolf was very keen to detect such a disposition in others. At her first meeting with T. S. Eliot, for instance, Woolf “immediately detected in him that will and power,” catching “his slow, controlled speech, and the peculiar contradiction between his careful manner and his widely glittering eye” (Lee 433). Woolf did not assail Eliot’s will and power wholesale, but she remained consistent in her repulsion to Pound. Not surprisingly,

Woolf disagreed with Eliot's enthusiasm for Pound. Although Woolf never met Pound, she instinctively disliked him and his works, which resonated with the poet's will-to-power (Lee 433).<sup>147</sup>

Influenced by Pater's gem-like moment that permits one's susceptibility to impressions, Woolf objected to a group of artists adhering to a crystalline product in the context of the 1930s, given that a gem-like work was often used to signify the artist's will-to-power. The combustion of word-residues tended to imply the creator's superiority as a human being, not merely as an artist; subsequently, a well-shaped work became the medium that "advertises" the artists. "The Duchess and the Jeweller" embodies the way in which the character refines his appearance to invent a perfect shape, thereby advertizing his style, as if he himself were a marketplace commodity for visual pleasure. Woolf subtly ridicules his obsession with refining forms, revealing both vanity in the project and the limitation of achieving the goal itself. Although Oliver strives to eliminate any "residue" unfitting his present status as a rich man, he encounters the return of the residues that get beyond his control.

If Eliot's *The Waste Land* underwent a process of purgation in the hands of the better craftsman, Woolf's 1938 story embeds a reshaped human form manipulated by fashion in commodity culture. Oliver personifies a "revised" form that has undergone the process of refinement. As the story begins, the narrator introduces Oliver as a social climber who lives "at the top of a house overlooking the Green Park," where he rather self-contentedly reflects on his rise from being a boy selling stolen dogs on Sunday. He

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<sup>147</sup> Woolf's objection to Pound became the first contentious issue with Eliot (Lee 433).

addresses himself, “Behold liver,” . . . “You who began life in a filthy little alley, you who. . .” (248). Having invested his money in a project of sophistication, the self-made man seeks to gain aesthetic refinement by means of dress, shoes, and other lavish items, the external signs of cultural sophistication that invent visual distinction.<sup>148</sup> Oliver’s money allows for the growing refinement of his appearance: he “dressed better and better; and had, first a handsome cab; then a car; and first he went up to the dress circles, then down into the stalls” (249).

The evolution of dress, car, house, and social circle shows that Oliver’s material success engenders cultural, social and aesthetic refinement: his economic capital has reshaped the fashionable façade. By appearing in an urban milieu with stylish dress and car, Oliver stages himself and displays his own refinement to the mass of spectators, as if he incarnated a fetishistic commodity. Yet, Oliver’s sartorial concern accompanies Woolf’s satiric comment: his clothes are “all shapely, shining; cut from the best cloth by the best scissors in Saville Row. But he dismantled himself often and become again a little boy in a dark alley” (248). Like the hands of “the better craftsman” precisely cutting out the waste of words, the “best scissors” produce tight clothes, obeying the strict rules of fashion. Oliver reflects on the material success that has brought him the appearance of refinement, but then he encounters a memory of his childhood: “. . . he dismantled himself often and became again a little boy in a dark alley” (248).

Destabilizing Oliver’s appearance of refinement owed to the designer’s dress, the return of the memory has the same impact on his surface refinement as the word-debris has on

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<sup>148</sup> For the theme of the making of distinction, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

the scene of the “shining and cool” jewels. Behind Oliver’s pose of sophistication there is the residue of a memory that mocks his obsession with refinement.

Oliver’s self-conscious refinement in appearance amplifies the meaning of a passage in *Three Guineas*, in which Woolf examines the association between a distinction through dress and a disposition towards war:

What connection is there between the sartorial splendors of the educated man and the photographs of ruined houses and dead bodies? Obviously the connection between dress and war is not far to seek; your finest clothes are those that you wear as soldiers. . . . Here, too, we marvel at the brilliance of your clothes; here, too, we watch maces erect themselves and processions form, and note with eyes too dazzled to record the differences, let alone to explain them, the subtle distinctions of hats and hoods, of purples and crimsons, of velvets and cloths, of cap and gown. (21, 23)

Putting forward an analogy between an educated man’s dress and a soldier’s uniforms, Woolf describes the interconnection of vanity, dress, and war. What Woolf assumed here is that people might want to dress differently to advertise their superiority over others: the dress plays “the advertisement function,” carrying a message that the wearer seems most singular” (20). Woolf wrote, “the wearer is not to us a pleasing or an impressive spectacle,” and instead, he looks like “a ridiculous, a barbarous, a displeasing spectacle,” because such a visual distinction tends to raise twined emotions “competition and jealousy,” which “have their share in encouraging a disposition towards war” (*Three Guineas*, 21). In short, advertising “the social, profession, or intellectual standing of the

wearer,” the finest dress gratifies the wearer’s vanity, while heating the feeling of jealousy, a disposition towards war. The dress also “covers nakedness” the natural human body (*Three Guineas*, 20), just as a solid frame of art suppresses the flesh of words.

### **Smell, a Silent Rupture**

The masking of nakedness belongs to Woolf’s category of war-dispositions: vanity and deception, two sides of the same coin, emerge in the process of covering nakedness, and such an obsession with a visual façade triggers a disposition towards war. Oliver’s refined appearance alludes to the intertwined connection of sophistication, refinement, deception and war. When the narrator remarks that Oliver and the Duchess “were friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other. . .” (251), Oliver and the Duchess are represented as sinister warriors. The language of war renders the characters the image of warriors fighting against the traces of immorality and vulgarity by means of achieving the visual sophistication.

However, despite the material properties that produce the effects on his distinction and deception, Oliver is “not satisfied yet,” just as a camel at the zoo “is dissatisfied with its lot” (249). It seems crucial to note that Oliver’s dissatisfaction is presented through his insatiable nose: “he was the richest jeweller in England; but his nose, which was long and flexible, like an elephant’s trunk, seemed to say by its curious quiver at the nostrils (but it seemed as if the whole nose quivered, not only the



nostrils). . . still smelt something under the ground a little further off” (249). Woolf compares Oliver to “a giant hog” smelling a bigger truffle “after unearthing this truffle and that” (249). Oliver’s job does not call for an acute sense of smell because jewelry does not smell. Then, what does Oliver keep searching for with his nose? Woolf pursues the characterization of Oliver’s nose in order to suggest his nostalgia of smell, a sense that has been suppressed while climbing to his current wealth, and civilizing his façade, but remains a part of elements constituting his identity. Although Oliver has shaped his façade to display an image of distinction, his hunger for smell hints that he still remains desirous of something deeper and non-artificial.

“The Duchess and the Jeweller” takes smell as the most natural, spontaneous, rich and authentic sense. Significantly, the story renders olfaction a striking prerogative, transposing the major organ of perception from eye to nose. The narrator says:

Imagine a giant hog in a pasture rich with truffles; after unearthing this truffle and that, still it smells a bigger, a blacker truffle under the ground further off. So Oliver snuffed always in the rich earth of Mayfair another truffle, a blacker, a bigger further off. (249)

As opposed to the scene where Oliver is captivated by the flaming light of the jewels, this passage suggests that he yearns to get bigger and darker truffles through his nose, not his eyes. In the story, smell and words go hand in hand, making visible their shared aspects: their freedom, spontaneity, and denial of being manipulated. Oliver’s unsatisfied olfaction presents the writer’s discontent with a crystalline work of art that restrains words to its surface frame. The narrator values the dimension of depth when

she portrays Oliver as a giant hog digging his territory to find a bigger truffle, which seems to be located at the core of the earth (253). This penetrating image suggests that the bigger, and darker truffle can be found not on the surface level but in the unseen and deeper space. The deeper site might hide Oliver's ultimate treasure the "bigger truffle," and in this deeper site the character might satisfy his hungry nose. As the invisibility and richness of the deeper space evokes, such a terrain—beyond human sight—comes to be seen as a mysterious zone, governed not by human manipulation but by the autonomous power of nature. Separate from Oliver's private room absorbing the laws of consumer capitalism, the deeper sphere stands as a realm untouched by cultures. This space, then, can be paralleled with the supposed secret territory of words, which resist being fixed in an organic form, a man-made frame in pursuit of aesthetic completeness and refinement. Put another way, Woolf refers to Oliver's "sniffing" nose as a clue of his repressed desire for smell, and by doing so, the writer reveals her desire for words: she might wish to express the autonomy of words, which, like smell, are neither confined to visible surfaces nor subjected to craftsmen's manipulation.

"Depth" emerges as significant in characterizing the sense of smell in the works of Woolf. Elsewhere in the 1938 story, smell evokes depth, warmth, affection, sympathy and love. Sometimes Woolf's works employ the trope of stench in order to draw the reader's sympathy toward social outsiders, rather than denigrating the less "sophisticated" and less "civilized" people who are characterized by a bad smell. In her 10 Sep. 1933 letter to Francis Birrell, Woolf referred to herself as "one who loves the

smell of the rubbish heap” (*Letters* V, 222).<sup>149</sup> As Heather Levy observes, Woolf tends to assign bad smells to social outcasts such as Miss Kilman in *Mrs. Dalloway* and La Trobe, a racial and sexual outsider in *Between the Acts*. Specifically, “Miss Kilman’s rancid overcoat matches her bitterness,” while La Trobe, who assuages her loneliness with alcohol, “is soaked in whiskey sodas and depression” (Levy 51). This “smelly” features call attention to the presence of social outcasts of whom privileged social groups are oblivious.

Smell becomes the language of love in *Flush: A Biography* (1933), Woolf’s imaginative biography of the nineteenth century English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Woolf draws on the olfactory perception of E. B. Browning’s cocker spaniel, named Flush, in tracing her secret love with Robert Browning. Discovering the signs of love through his nose, Flush is weaving the romantic fragments left by lovers: it is his olfaction that detects the signs of their love. The remaking of their romance can be achieved through combining the smells that are thrilling the dog’s nostrils: love can be traced by Flush’s nose, which is perceptive of various kinds of smells, including “strong smells of earth, sweet smells of flowers, nameless smells of leaf and bramble,” “sour smells as they crossed the road,” and “pungent smells as they entered bean-fields” (*Flush*, 16).

While encouraging us to trace how Flush’s nose serves to remake the romantic narrative, Woolf suggests the limitation of a crystalline work of art that primarily appeals to human eyes. A solid work of art might fail to capture subtle diffusions of

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<sup>149</sup> *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Vol. V: 1932-1935. Eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London: Hogarth P, 1978).

love, because it is a nose, indeed of eyes, that most successfully captures the diffusion of feelings. For Woolf, this sort of failure takes place even in the works of “greatest” poets—whose olfaction seems far less acute than their other senses: “the greatest poets in the world have smelt nothing but roses on the one hand, and dung on the other” (*Flush*, 122). Woolf found artists doomed to miss the essence of love, insofar as they remain insensitive to smells, because “love chiefly smell; form and colour were smell; music and architecture, law, politics and science were smell” (*Flush*, 122). Whereas beauty calls for the information of impressions, love embraces their “rupture,” which involves an amorphous, and ineffable feeling: “Beauty, so it seems at least, had to be crystallized into a green or violet powder and puffed by some celestial syringe down the fringed channels that lay behind his nostrils before it touched Flush’s sense; and then it issued not in words. But in a silent rupture” (*Flush*, 122). As “a silent rupture” intimates, Flush’s world, governed by smell rather than sight, breaks apart from the space of organic wholeness, totality, and completeness.

Similarly, when Woolf brought the phrase “a smell of burning” to her 1924 essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown,” she aimed to privilege a character’s invisible and ineffable impressions. In this essay, written to criticize the novelists such as Arnold Bennett and his peers, whom she calls “materialists,” Woolf argues that Bennett’s obsession with materialistic details makes him a superficial writer, making him neglect

the core of human nature because he emphasizes all the surface details in fiction.<sup>150</sup>

Challenging the notion that the author is a God-like creator, Woolf constructs a fictional scene where she encounters the character “Mrs Brown,” an elderly stranger on a train, and a man sitting beside her, Mr. Smith, who seems to exert some power over her, and who, before leaving the train, speaks to her “in a bullying, menacing way” (8). Left alone in the railway carriage with Mrs. Brown, the narrator is overwhelmed by the impression that Mrs. Brown made, and the impression “came pouring out like a drought, like a smell of burning” (8). The impression of this woman—“a smell of burning”—is what would be missing in the works of Bennett, who is unable to smell the ineffable impressions a character creates. Offering this olfactory image, marked by diffusion and invisibility, Woolf stresses the un-known realms in each individual and suggests the difficulty of representing a character by means of visual devices such as clothes, houses, appearances, and other materialistic elements.

The link between odour and words comes into being in *Three Guineas*, in which Woolf suggests that the word “Miss” attends “a certain odour” producing some effects on discriminating women in the realm of profession:

Odour, then, or shall we call it “atmosphere”?— is a very important element in professional life; in spite of the fact that like other important elements it is impalpable. It can escape the noses of examiners in examination room, yet penetrate boards and divisions and affect the

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<sup>150</sup> “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (London: Hogarth P, 1924) was written as a polemical answer to Arnold Bennett’s claim that the novel is in crisis due to the failure of Georgian novelists in the art of “character-making” which he finds crucial for successful novel-writing.

senses of those within. . . . Atmosphere plainly is a very might power. Atmosphere not only changes the sizes and shape of things; it affects solid bodies, like salaries, which might have been thought impervious to atmosphere. (52)

Woolf points to certain kinds of words retaining “odour” or “atmosphere,” which is amorphous and impalpable, but powerfully affects the way we think of the referents. Calling for our discernment in the implications of odour of words, Woolf traces the insidious power of the word “Miss,” for instance. She uncovers the odour attached to the signifier, attempting to disclose how the word has served to marginalize women in the realm of professions, although it recalls a sweet sentiment in the domestic sphere. In *The Language of Modernism* (1989) Randy Malamud notes that *Three Guineas* treats odour or atmosphere as an “extratextual device” that “transcends” the written text, “one which men have used for generations to discriminate against women” (59). Malamud continues to depict smell as a sort of unwritten text, which serves to compensate for a woman’s “marginal accessibility to the old words” (59).

Smell is an extratextual device in the 1922 novel *Jacob’s Room*: a scent gives warmth and sentimental affection to the rhetoric of indifference in masculine discourse. This book begins with an allusion to piece of female writing, Betty Flanders’ tear-stained letter to Captain Barfoot, who is “punctual as ever” (*Jacob’s Room*, 2). The tear-stained letter, which expresses the mother’s sorrow at the news of her son’s death, constitutes a remarkable opposition to a utilitarian wartime letter informing only facts. Paul Fussell mentions the “form-rhetoric” of wartime letters invented during the World

War I in *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell draws on the effects of the Field Service Post Card, referring to the postcard as “the progenitor of all modern forms on which you fill in things or cross out things or check off things, from police traffic summonses to “questionnaires “and income-tax blanks” (185). The reduction of the narrative line to a series of parentheses characterizes the Field Service Post Card. Fussell comments that the new formal postcard was invented to maximize the effectiveness of telegraphic communication during the First World War. Roger Poole precisely describes the nature of the “Form” Fussell referred to in his book: “Personal experience is reduced to a bare statement of fact, life and death are reduced to an item of news, the personal and the imitate detail are reduced to a matter of public knowledge and speculation, and in every way the world of subjective privilege is subjected to democratic objectivity” (Poole 84).

Reflecting on “masters of language” dominant in the patriarchal discourse, the narrator of *Jacob’s Room* alludes to the informal and sentimental kinds of letters written by female writers. Woolf comments on women’s writings that expose “the sentimental, the unwarranted discourse” that is affiliated with “the domestic discourses” embracing the terrain of imagination (Clark 37, 41): “The words we seek hang close to the tree. We come at dawn and find them sweet beneath the leaf. Mrs. Flanders wrote letters; Mrs. Jarvis wrote them; Mrs. Durrant too; Mother Stuart actually scented her pages, thereby adding a flavour which the English language fails to provide (*Jacob’s Room*, 72). Mother Stuart’s act of “scenting” letters comes from her desire to recover the lost feelings and affections that have been obliterated in the patriarchal public discourse,

which advocated the impersonal and formulaic rhetoric. Like Betty Flanders's tear-stained letters (*Jacob's Room*, 1), Mother Stuart's scented text is made proper to carry the depth of personal feeling, which might not be contained in an authorized form of writing.<sup>151</sup>

"The Duchess and the Jeweller" enables us to see that the Western civilizing process has engendered the suppression of smell by attaching negative connotations to olfaction, and Woolf challenges this negation in the name of civilization. The 1938 story recalls the historical trend in which social and cultural refinement has grown with the elimination of smell, in that smells are often identified with poverty, animality, vulgarity, and social marginalization: the civilizing process is in fact the process of eradicating smells. Alan Corbin examines the historical moments when smells disappeared in the world of upper classes. In *The Foul and the Fragrant* (1986), Corbin says, since the Enlightenment period in European culture, the privileged classes strove to avoid smells through social programs and disciplines by stressing sanitization and bodily hygiene. The bourgeoisie invented deodorizing tactics, being in favor of fresh air, cleanness, and good health, and all of these paralleled their primary drive toward civilization, intelligence, progress, refinement and sophistication. The "bourgeois deodorization presupposed wealth, or at least comfort," and in contrast, bad smells became the definite sign of poverty, vulgarity, barbarism and lack of intelligence

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<sup>151</sup> For the theme of women writer's sentimental discourse in the context of modernism, see Suzanne Clark, *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991). This book presents Clark's struggle to "restore the sentimental to modernist literary history—with all its banality and also all its connections to subversion and ethical appeal" (15).



(Corbin 213). Indeed, one must get rid of troublesome smell to enter the world of privilege. The eradication of smell was worked out at the fin de siècle among the affluent and educated British people. Privileging the doctrine of progress and influenced by developments in the medical, biological and psychiatric sciences, the British bourgeoisie had immense anxiety over degeneration of the human race, as William Greenslade notes in *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel 1880-1940* (1994).<sup>152</sup> Those who feared the regression to the “uncivilized” past had to manipulate smells because smell seemed at odds with progress and sophistication. In accordance with the horror of the regression to the pre-modernized world, in which smell remained critical because odors had “spiritual significance” and indicated “truth,” the privileged Europeans regulated smell by means of ousting natural odors from the cultural arena, and inventing artificial fragrances that might be able to suppress the natural bodily odors, which seemed to be at odds with the twined ideologies championed by aristocrats and the bourgeois, progress and sophistication (Smith 60, 66).<sup>153</sup>

While achieving the appearance of refinement, Oliver needs to get rid of the stench that might remain from his former environment “a filthy little alley” (248). In general, “filth” is considered a term of “condemnation” because the word evokes stench, dust, pollution, infection, decay, decomposition, waste, rubbish, the rotten, malnutrition,

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<sup>152</sup> See William P. Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Greenslade examines the impacts of degeneration theories and scientific positivism on British culture and literature, focusing on the works of Thomas Hardy, George Gissing, H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf.

<sup>153</sup> Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2007).

excrements, and sickness (Cohen and Johnson xi). Oliver's escape from the filthy smell is aligned with the Western civilizing project in which the educated and bourgeois were eager to avoid smells, afraid of "the terrible dangers of decay" and "waste" that are attached to strong, foul odors (Corbin 214). Desiring to be accepted by the privileged social circle, the social climber Oliver might need to divest himself of the smell of filth. Thus, the more money he earns, the better he dresses; and this process more and more alienates him from his relation to smells. Despite his achieved refinement, however, like words rupturing a writer's crafts, the smell of the filthy alley returns to Oliver through his memory.<sup>154</sup>

Smell's rebelliousness seemed troublesome not only to the bourgeois anxious to protect such norms as order, organization, and self-discipline, but also to the master of the pure aesthetic Immanuel Kant. In fact, Kant supposed disinterestedness as the precondition for aesthetic pleasure, separating aesthetic judgments from all pursuits that had any mixture of utilitarian intentions: for him appreciation of art requires undisturbed attention and pure contemplation.<sup>155</sup> When Kant developed his theory of beauty, he left out the play of smell, presuming that olfaction fails to supply any contemplative pleasure. The olfactory perception, Kant thought, is of importance only for maintaining a clean

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<sup>154</sup> Woolf's description of the self-made man's "regression" seems to challenge the high culture of refinement. That Woolf supplies such a positive meaning to the regression opposes Donald Child's reading of Woolf in *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001). Child argues that Woolf was tainted by the thoughts of eugenics growing up from around 1890s. Referring to Woolf's acquaintances such as Vita Sackville West, Eliot, and Yeats, who had some passions for the eugenics movement, Child labels Woolf an advocator of it.

<sup>155</sup> See Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*. 1790. Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

environment. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant asserts that the sense of smell is “the most thankless” and “the most expendable” sense because “disgusting odors always outnumber pleasant ones (especially in crowded places), and even when we come across something fragrant, the pleasure we get from smelling it is always fleeting and transient” (37).

If Kant excluded smell from cognitive faculties constituting an aesthetic experience, in early twentieth century England, the Bloomsbury art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry did not grant a significant role to the olfaction in advancing Kant’s concept of aesthetic disinterestedness and constructing the modern version of formalism—“significant form.” Bell and Fry focused on lines, shapes, and colors, all of which are about visual arts pertaining to abstract painting, in particular. Differentiating between looking and mere seeing, these Bloomsbury critics privileged the visual sense over any other senses, and rarely discussed olfactory experiences.<sup>156</sup> The role of smell was neglected in their aesthetic theories. It seems no wonder that the “word-purifier” Pound rendered the negative image of smell, “the bad smell of London,” to what he saw as corruption by the 1930s.

In her 1938 short fiction Woolf empowers the long-neglected olfaction, revealing how the obsession with the visual is affiliated with the attempt to hide or eliminate smell, as well as words. Woolf represents a specific way of manipulating smell through the character of the Duchess. If Oliver eliminates smell to enter the new social class, the Duchess puts on artificial smell. Woolf introduces the Duchess’ emergence as follows:

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<sup>156</sup> See Clive Bell, *Art* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes C, 1914); Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (New York: Brentano’s, 1924).

“Then she loomed up, filling the door, filling the room with the aroma, the prestige, the arrogance, the pomp, the pride of all the Dukes and Duchesses swollen in one wave” (251). Aroma first marks the Duchess’ entrance to Oliver’s house. In resonance with Oliver’s ostensible facade, aroma serves to insinuate the Duchess’ arrogance and vanity absent from any authentic value. Woolf presents the aristocrat woman against the fin-de-siècle decadent backdrop where the process of olfactory aestheticization became highly sophisticated in keeping with the upper classes’ growing tastes for sensationalism, eroticism, hedonism, and narcissism.

Historically speaking, by virtue of artificial perfumes and aromas, the privileged tried to subdue natural smells in favor of artificial scents, especially in the late nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Reflecting this trend toward perfume, as Hans J. Rindisbacher notes in *The Smell of Books* (1992), perfumes permeate the aesthetic world of Dorian Gray, a narcissistic character infatuated with his own physical beauty in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890): for his self-pleasure Dorian puts “some perfume on his handkerchief”; he has a “delicately scented chamber” (qtd. in Rindisbacher, 191). Dorian’s perfume characterizes one aspect of the fin-de-siècle aestheticians, who utilized a range of artificial means in order to achieve the dandy image.

Whereas Wilde, one of the dandy writers, rarely provided perfume with negative connotations, “The Duchess and the Jeweller” associates artificial smell with deception, superficiality, and frivolity alike. Aroma and lies are coupled in shaping the character of

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<sup>157</sup> For a detailed discussion of the historical trend, see Alan Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1986); Hans J. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992).

the Duchess, who is the owner of the fake pearls that afford only use-value in her mind. In exchanging her false pearls with Oliver's money to pay off her gambling debts, she drops "ten pearls," "rolling from the slit in the ferret's belly—one, two, three, four—like the eggs of some heavenly bird" (252). In turn, these ten pearls overlap with "the ten minutes" Oliver deliberately calculated before meeting her. Making a game of power, Oliver has the aristocratic woman wait for exactly ten minutes for it gives him a sense of superiority: "And now—now—the hands of the clock ticked on. One, two, three, four. . . She would wait for ten minutes on a chair at the counter. She would wait his pleasure" (251). In parallel with the counted ten minutes, the Duchess' ten pearls represent power and deceit, playing the role of exchange-value. Despite the difference in their class and sex, Oliver and the Duchess collude in the "use" of the jewels and suppression of smell: "[t]hey were friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other. . ." (251). In this fashion, the world devoid of natural smell is characterized in Woolf's work by qualities such as power, luster, deception, and utilitarian exchange.

Highlighting the sense of smell, Woolf might intend to liberate a desire for lavishness suppressed in commodity culture, and further to privilege what gets beyond the law of capitalist marketplace—something unexchangeable that denies being replaced, copied, recycled, and refined. Smell belongs to such a category. As Kant suggested, smell is the most wasteful, and uncontrollable sense: if smell is diffused once, it denies being recalled. A visual product, like a work on paper, can be revised, copied, and retrieved, as Pound obsessively revised the manuscripts; the painter in *To the Lighthouse*,

Lily Briscoe, completes her unfinished painting after an interval of ten years; a character named John recollects broken beauties out of garbage in the short story “Solid Objects” (1920), abandoning a career in politics to search for a “precious gem” in the form of a lump of glass: he retrieves and reanimates the ambiguous objects that attract him.<sup>158</sup>

While visual objects can supply a chance for a renewal after being discarded, referents of smell deny being revisited.

Furthermore, smell rejects any medium that can express its qualities; for example, no word can exactly describe olfactory qualities. It is only smell itself that shows its identity. William Ian Miller points to the self-referential nature of smell in *The Anatomy of Disgust* (1997): “We cannot conjure up the memory of a smell like the memory of a face . . . Memories of taste and smell can only be triggered by a real experience of the same smell of taste” (76-77). Diane Ackerman makes the same point, beginning her book *A Natural History of the Senses* (1991): “Our sense of smell can be extraordinarily precise, yet it’s almost impossible to describe how something smells to someone who hasn’t smelled it” (6).<sup>159</sup> Miller’s and Ackerman’s accounts of smell present it as something authentic and unexchangeable. This characteristic of olfaction, its “un-exchangeability,” successfully suggests the anti-utilitarian nature of what Oliver is looking for by his nose—the bigger truffle at the core of the earth.

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<sup>158</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the nature of discarded artifacts in “Solid Objects,” see Bill Brown, “The Secret Life of Things: Virginia Woolf and the Matter of Modernism,” published in 1999. Brown investigates how “Solid Objects” illuminates the true nature of things—the “thingness” of things. To do this, Woolf dislodged things “from a history of their proximity to subjects, from liberating artifacts out of their status as determinate signs, from rendering a life of things that is irreducible to the history of human subjects” (Brown 412-13).

<sup>159</sup> Ackerman’s *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Random House, 1991) is an exemplary book about sense perceptions that starts the discussion of smell out of five senses.

### **Complete Waste, Expensive Love**

The story drops a hint that Oliver's visual pleasure from the jewels is about exchange-value, rather than absolute value. Note the sequence of incidents that might trigger Oliver's visual attachment to the jewels at his private room. Living at "a villa at Richmond, overlooking river, with trellises of red roses," Oliver used to stick one rose in his buttonhole every morning, but he keeps this habit up no more because the "Mademoiselle" picking the rose for him married another man (250). With the Mademoiselle gone from his house, Oliver "sighs," opens the door of the private room, unlocks the safes, and fixes his eyes on the shining jewels. In this manner, Oliver substitutes fetishistic pleasure from the quasi-romantic gesture, which indicates that the jewels are a superficial imitation of romance. As the richest dealer of jewels, Oliver possesses the jewels, but his utilitarian attitude toward things makes him the "dealer in minerals" who "sees only the commercial values, but not the beauty and unique nature of the mineral" (Marx 141). Oliver's utilitarian approach to the jewels can be read in contrast with John's intensive aesthetic devotion to discarded things in "Solid Objects," which leads John to fully investigate the magical nature of such objects. While John's realm enables aesthetic "contemplation" to displace "action," and "sheer existence" to take "precedence over signification" (Mao 1998; 28), Oliver's hoard produces use-value, sign-value, and cultural capital at once. Such a mixture of values takes place while he is seeking to "use" things, and his utilitarian treatment of the objects increasingly alienates him from "the secret life of things," which means their autonomous existence "outside the subject/object trajectory," in Bill Brown's words (Brown 388).

“The Duchess and the Jeweller” creates a remarkable image satirizing the utilitarian mastery over words, and jewels—and all this is, in fact, associated with the suppression of smell. To put it another way, attempting to challenge the obsession with “economic” precision of words and concentration of images, predominantly found in Pound’s poetics, Woolf deliberately invented a gem-like moment where a cluster of images comes together. The concentration of multiple images in an instantaneous moment satirizes a poet’s adherence to perfect fitness and to upper class hyper-sophistication alike. To unmask the vanity and will-to-power shared by artists and aristocrats, Woolf—as I will show—inscribes the crystal image on the face of the Duchess, whose strong aroma is considered the smell of deception. In a way to assign the crystalline image to the Duchess who smells of the odour of deception, Woolf exposes that the crystallization of words can partake of the suffocation of their natural power.

Specifically, the Duchess asks an exorbitant price for her imitation pearls to pay off her gambling debts, and to work her plan through to its end, the Duchess is shedding false tears: “Tears slid; tears fell; tears, like diamonds, collecting powder in the ruts of her cherry-blossom cheeks” (252). The woman’s tears (signifying the pearls Oliver named “Tears!”) are mixed up with her face powder (the diamonds matched with “Gunpowder”), and this combined component meets her “cherry-blossom cheeks, which color evokes the rubies (“Heart’s blood”). In such a way, the Duchess’ false tears function as a container keeping matters within, and take the shape of an economical poem, by which Woolf parodies the obsession with manipulating words. If the



Duchess's aroma prohibits the free release of "silent rupture," her tears come to confine the semiotic signs to their own transparent form.<sup>160</sup>

Let us contemplate the "bigger truffle" that Oliver wants to find. Hidden behind the surface, the bigger truffle seems fundamentally distinguishable from the hoarded jewels that are used for self-oriented purposes. Untouched by a man's utilitarian will-to-manipulation, the bigger truffle bears the silent rupture of words, and preserves their original smell, which might satiate Oliver's dissatisfied nose. One crucial point is that Woolf associates the ineffable feeling of words with the sense of smell, and then with "love," as she reiterates this triple conjunction in a series of works such as *Flush* and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown."

In the world of Woolf, one's obsession with surface has to do with his or her fear of self-sacrifice, the core of love; accordingly, "stinginess" became a foe of love, words, and smell from her perspective. It is possible to see what Woolf owed to Pater's crystalline ideal, and, to some extent, she adapted his aesthetic notions to her own writings. Yet Woolf valued a crystalline moment not because it removes the "surplus" but because it embraces the waste. *To the Lighthouse* offers a scene in which she implies that the crystalline moment is created at the expense of priceless waste such as a consumption of human body. The novel shows that Mrs. Ramsay's gem-like moment comes at all costs of "pumping love" into a "chilly space" (*To the Lighthouse*, 200). The "pumping love" is made absolute, resisting any substitution. In the dinner party where the crystalline moment comes into being, Mrs. Ramsay serves a piece of the

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<sup>160</sup> The solid frame the Duchess invents is opposed to what Woolf proposes to establish in *Three Guineas*: the experimental collage made of shabby and flexible matters to prevent war.

Boeuf en Daube—the stew embodying perfect “coherence in things” and “stability.” When Mrs. Ramsay serves the Boeuf en Daube to each guest, the narrator finds the character “resting her whole weight upon what at the other end of the table her husband was saying about the square root of one thousand two hundred and fifty-three” (*To the Lighthouse*, 107). The reference to her body—“her whole weight”—implies that Mrs. Ramsay’s sacrifice demands the complete exhaustion of her body, which creates the “unexchangeable” because it costs too much.<sup>161</sup> The creation of something “unexchangeable” tends to go with one’s self-forgettable attention to others in Woolf’s view.

The 1938 story characterizes Oliver as a utilitarian consumer distant from such an effort to forget himself. Oliver used be afraid of consuming money and emotions, as his hoarded jewels and quasi-romantic gesture suggest. Instead of plunging into love, Oliver takes quasi-romantic gestures, aptly exchanging one thing with another. T. S. Eliot’s J. Alfred Prufrock seems to be Oliver’s prototype whose social self-consciousness makes him obsess over his mentality.<sup>162</sup> Prufrock desires to “force the moment to its crisis” with his potential lover, but cannot presume to approach the woman, exposing his inability to act and continuing to pose his question “Do I Dare?” Prufrock’s only defense is to take a gesture from a grand narrative, as he identifies

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<sup>161</sup> Some readers interpret the Boeuf en Daube as the embodiment of Mrs. Ramsay’s body. For example, Maggie Humm describes the body of the Boeuf en Daube as “a referent for Mrs. Ramsay’s maternal body” (244). See Humm, “Beauty and Woolf,” *Feminist Theory* 7 (2006): 237-54.

<sup>162</sup> Prufrock is the speaker of the poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” composed in 1910 or 1911, but not published until June 1915.

himself with a second rate Hamlet: “I am not Prince Hamlet.” What Oliver has in common with Prufrock is that, just as Prufrock adopts a mere pose for his self-consolation, so Oliver tries to see himself constantly through the medium of a quasi-romantic narrative, by which he can displace real emotional engagements with others.

If Prufrock remains a much more “aesthetic” thinker, whose “failing as a human being are the result of his inability to act” (Craig 115), Oliver appears as a utilitarian version of Prufrock. He is quick to hoard commodities, but slow to consume money and emotions. Internalizing the rules of the capitalist marketplace, he amalgamates values, renews facades, and advertises his refinement to the crowd. A cluster of his actions, which signal his tendency of beautifying his life by means of self-made tools, show that he partakes of a trend of commercial culture coming into vogue since the 1920s. In *Art and Commerce* (1926), Roger Fry refers to the way that advertising took on “a new complexion” during the late 1920s: “It is tinged with a new poetry—a new romance. It is no longer the severely practical affair it once was; it brings about a new relation” (20). Oliver adopts what Fry describes in *Art and Commerce*. Keeping up the habit of advertising himself, the utilitarian man tries to quench his emotional thirst by tingeing his dry life with “a new poetry” or “a new romance”; for example, the Mademoiselle’s rose helps him fabricate a romantic feeling, but such a quasi-romantic gesture no more than sharpens the gap between the authentic and the artificial.

Notwithstanding, Oliver’s sharp nose and word-residues insinuate his deep desire to change the static life he lives, and finally he does what Prufrock fails to do: he decides to waste money for buying a one-day romance. When the Duchess allows him to spend

a weekend with her youngest daughter Diana, whom Oliver yearns for, he writes a cheque for twenty thousand pounds for the fake pearls. After wasting the money, Oliver looks at the portrait of his mother, and feels as if he hears her voice: “Oliver!” . . . “Have a sense? Don’t be a fool!” (253). Responding to her admonition, Oliver makes a gesture of asking forgiveness, “raising his hands as if he asked pardon of the old woman in the picture” (253). One might claim that Oliver’s waste derives from his lustrous desire.<sup>163</sup> To be sure, the narrator refrains from endorsing Oliver’s line of conduct explicitly, but Woolf does not seem to denounce his nonsensical decision wholesale.

The mother figure keeps monitoring Oliver, but “framed” within the portrait, she is no more than an empty power. Oliver’s violation of the mother’s norm, then, might reflect Woolf’s own desire to transgress the discipline of restraint, and her yearning toward an alternative art where words, emotions, and senses are liberated from a craftsman’s will-to-mastery. In this sense, Oliver’s lavish consumption of money alienates itself from the longstanding horror of waste, providing a subversive model against the law of consumer capitalism that turns everything into the use-value. Through the man’s excessive expenditure, Woolf exhibits her own aspiration to disrupt the utilitarian mind encoded by the capitalist market of thoughts, as well as the will-to-mastery overemphasized by craftsmen, who strove to contain words within refined frames in pursuit of linguistic minimalism, because in Woolf’s view, these convoluted politics come down to one simple gripe: words are useful. Woolf’s complaints were couched in the utilitarian and practical approach to words. Against the increasing

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<sup>163</sup> Laura María Lojo Rodríguez maintains this position in “Contradiction and Ambivalence: Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetic Experience in ‘The Duchess and the Jeweller’.”

tendency of treating words as something “in trade,” in the 1938 story Woolf portrayed an absurd waste as a way to rethink the unexchangeable nature of words, things, and arts.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I have considered works by Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf in order to reveal the ways in which these writers have shaped the other's unclassifiable beauty in their texts. The episodes of Connie and Mellors in Lawrence, the snapshot of a girl in Spark, and an English jeweler's private room in Woolf serve as sites for engaging the textual image of beauty on which this dissertation has focused. Related to epiphanies, moments of revelation enter the particular texts, making the other's singular qualities perceptible to an observer in the narrative and to readers. Considered by this dissertation as marks of a lover attending to the beloved, the aesthetic spaces created in these texts manifest the writers' yearning for the other and the desire to give literary shape to the beloved's "atopos," meaning the unclassifiable and the singular, in order to commemorate it.

The textual forms of beauty resist dominant ideologies in the post-World War I/II culture such as Fascism, Nazism, utilitarianism, and consumer capitalism, which estranged people from experiencing beauty by making it indistinguishable from beautified images of things and human beings. In other words, in attempting to accomplish self-oriented purposes, whether political schemes or artistic ambitions, many twentieth century artists, politicians, rhetoricians, among others, willfully evaded the unique and excessive qualities inherent in external beings and things, and engaged themselves in producing certain aesthetic forms whose contents grant euphoria, coziness,

and self-assurance to the maker and beholder. Linked to a practice of making “comfortable” images, this type of creation, so-called “beautification,” served to efface the singular characteristics of others, and fostered the myth that one has the ability to master external realities.

The texts I have focused on self-reflexively resist this pervasive beautification. Imposing a “state of loss,” each of them “discomforts [. . .] unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories,” and “brings to a crisis his relation with language” (Barthes 1975; 14). Far from being an easy and comfortable space for a reader, the work of each writer turns out to be disturbing and excessive by virtue of the overflowing words, emotions, and energies running through the text. Their texts rebel against dominant images of beauty, which cut off corporeal elements out of things and human figures, and against the view that invariably identifies the apotheosis of art’s autonomy with a reactionary pursuit of the status quo wherein Benjamin recognized the seed of Fascism: “[Fascism] is evidently the consummation of ‘*l’art pour l’art*’” (Benjamin 242).

If they merit being called rebellious, it is not because of their conscious subversion of such sociopolitical systems, but for their undistracted attention to the other’s singularity, an attention that, importantly, avoids utility and will-to-mastery. In this circumstance, the rejection of beautification became imperative for Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf because it signaled for them the catastrophic failure of apprehending the other’s original, unclassifiable, and unreproducible qualities. This is why Lawrence and Woolf were resistant to the ways in which their characters contained words within

clichés. The fiction of Spark, in fact, makes it visible that the will-to-beautification permeates the institutional system to the extent that members of society construe their own bodies as raw material for “a work of art”: a skinny body. In opposition to beautification, which remained fettered to self-centered desires, and will-to-manipulation over things and human beings. This aspect constitutes what I have called aesthetic spaces in their writings occurs where Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf embody beauty in textual form by creating pleasantly disturbing realms where the other’s “atopos” keeps alive.

Embracing anti-utilitarian aspirations, the texts draw us to aesthetic spaces that may welcome “wasteful” activities and “unproductive” attitudes: a lover’s lavish consumption of emotion, feelings, and words takes place in his or her pursuit of the other. Replete with a lover’s passion for the beloved, which involves the sense of wonder, adoration, and praise of the other without potential profit, the textual space constitutes an anti-utilitarian territory that espouses luxurious consumptions and energies. This echoes Georges Bataille’s imagination of “nonproductive expenditure,” meaning the lavish consumption of surplus energy that otherwise might cause catastrophic expenditure like war.<sup>164</sup> Against utilitarian ideas that regard “large squanderings of energy” as unacceptable (Bataille 30), Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf create aesthetic spaces characterized by excessive emotions, perceptions, and words, and, in these spheres, an observer of beauty transposes his or her focus upon the self to the other.

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<sup>164</sup> See Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy* (New York: Zone Books, 1998). In this book Bataille attributed the outbreak of World Wars to industrial excess.



The aesthetic space serves as a location that captures a moment of beauty's revelation. In the preceding chapters, I placed the manifestation of beauty in relation to the idea of the epiphany envisioned by Pater, Joyce, and other modernists. I launched this discussion by considering Mellors's bathing and the "bird-girl" scene in the work of Lawrence and Joyce; the subsequent chapter examined Spark's engagement and response to the spiritual epiphany; lastly, I discussed Pater's influence on Woolf, speculating on her attraction to a gem-like moment, and a crystalline writing. These writers' invented moments, however, remake the abstract, and create transcendent epiphanies that raise the mind above "desire and loathing" and above a kinetic sensation, which is "purely physical."<sup>165</sup> In these writers' view, an epiphanic revelation is too visual, and in epiphany, the prerogative falls on the viewer, not on the other. Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf wished to recreate the viewer-oriented moment, sustaining the notion that the moment of epiphany is not able to express the fullness of the other because it misses the other's fleshiness. Eventually, their texts came to engage more vivid and vital moments, in which multiple senses and corporeal images come together. Even Woolf, heavily affected by the formalist notion of beauty—"significant form"—inscribed a new type of moment "vivid to the eye, but not to the eye alone" in her 1938 work.<sup>166</sup> By virtue of such stylistic developments, their texts include aesthetic sites full

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<sup>165</sup> Here I borrow from Stephen's words in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1917).

<sup>166</sup> Woolf once admired Thomas Hardy's moment of vision expressed in *Jude the Obscure* for it seemed "vivid to the eye, but not to the eye alone, for every sense participates" in the scene (*The Second Common Reader*, 248).

of both physical and spiritual feelings, and thereby challenge the visual and abstract mode of expression.

It is important to note that these particular sites in texts serve to uncover the chasm between the visible and the invisible, the accessible and the distant. This gap, in turn, mirrors the writer's own oscillation between depth and surface, reflecting his or her ability and inability to represent the referent. Owing to a writer's desire and effort to express the other's beauty through verbal arts, each of these texts achieves a singular image of beauty, separate from merely "beautified" images, but at the same time, these spaces make visible what a writer is unable to do in terms of shaping the other's qualities that may be behind the accessible domain of the surface. Fascinated with the expressed insideness of Cézanne's apples, Lawrence desired to engage the feeling of depth in his last novel, but this novel betrays Lawrence's failure at representing the depth of others. In order to portray a delicate touch between two surfaces, the flesh and the flowers, the novel intimates the writer's gesture of resigning himself from penetration, which the novel considers essential to express the other's beauty.

Meanwhile, the snapshot of a character in Spark's fiction addresses the writer's intention to express the figure's fullness, capturing the excessive energy that stems from her internal body, but it also binds the referent to the narrow frame of the image. Woolf sets up an English jeweler's private room where words reveal themselves to be free, spontaneous, and unrestrained by a human figure's mastery over them. By engaging the image of floating words in this setting, Woolf longed to express the autonomous nature of words, governed not by a craftsman's mastery so much as by the words' own

mysterious internal power. This story, however, suggests that the making of these floating words can be another deliberate manipulation, self-reflexively aligning the writer with the Duchess in Woolf's story, who is characterized by her artificial "smell," fundamentally the most spontaneous sense and analogized with words in this story. All these writers' predicaments, then, encourage us to regard their texts as different from other crystalline works in the context of modernism, such as the poems that manifest the Imagists' willed manipulation of their texts.

Indeed, the act of making a textual form can risk engendering physical deformities in the bodies of texts and the makers. Susan Stewart attends to such deformities, which the act of making artworks might bring to the maker's body. In *The Poet's Freedom* (2011), she refers to the case of Hephaestus, the genius of making:

Each act of making wears down the maker, returning him or her all the more to the condition of clay from which he or she arose. It is striking that the genius of making, Hephaestus, is the only one of the gods noted for his deformities; he is ugly and lame, halting in his motions. His lived diminishment is all the more emphasized by the endlessly supplemental forms of reality that he is able to create by means of his forging art. (117)

As Stewart remarks, the blacksmith Hephaestus stands as the only "ugly and lame" figure among the Greek gods and goddess. Despite his natural talent at forging artifacts, Hephaestus is characterized by his physical deformities, and this characterization alludes to the conjunction between making and suffering. Providing an archetype of the plight of an artist, Hephaestus's deformed body signals the ontological conditions of an artist in

creating works of art. In reality, the burdens of writing a text remained intense for Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf, and especially, their ambition to depict a figure's beauty, which cannot be fully translated by language, often wore them down, causing physical and emotional fragility.

Like Hephaestus's lamed body, the writers' textual bodies acquire, record, or embrace deformities in various ways. While shaping the other's ineffability, Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* produced a huge number of digressions, which tainted the novel among critics. Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* is filled with images of deformed bodies, which signify deformed works of art. Spark's book begins with the narrator's description of deformed buildings in 1945, London:

The streets of the cities were lined with buildings in bad repair or in no repair at all, bomb-sites piled with stony rubble, houses like giant teeth in which decay had been drilled out, leaving only the cavity. Some bomb-ripped buildings looked like the ruins of ancient castles until, at a closer view, the wallpapers of various quite normal rooms would be visible, room above room, exposed, as on a stage, with one wall missing; most of all the staircase survived, like a new art-form. . . ." (7)

If the setting in Spark's fiction exists as a deformed site, signaling the advent of a new art form, Woolf's 1938 work came with her intention to "deform" the organic and purified body of a text. Around the hoard of jewels, the writer was scattering word-residues, which many of her contemporaries considered a sign of aesthetic failure.

No matter how many deformities the texts acquire, the ruins create a textual condition for the revelation of beauty, beckoning to us to perceive one's "atopos," which, as the uncharted beauty in aesthetic standards, escapes the frames of art, society, and human understanding. Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf were often enamored of a "well-wrought urn," but for them, what seemed more essential was to embody the other's singular qualities, because they conceived of this as the way to love the beloved without reducing the beloved to a mere type.

In closing, I want to quote from Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941) to emphasize one point shared by the three writers: all of them believed that the fear of waste would go against the act of love, whether in art or in life. *Between the Act's* narrator portrays Mrs. Manresa, one of the spectators of the village peasant play, scripted and directed by La Trobe:

"For myself," Mrs. Manresa continued, "speaking plainly, I can't put two words together. I don't know how it is—such a chatterbox as I am with my tongue, once I hold a pen". . . . "And my handwriting—so huge—so clumsy—" . . . .

Very delicately William Dodge set the cup in its saucer.

"Now he," said Mrs. Manresa, as if referring to the delicacy with which he did this, and imputing to him the same skill in writing, "writes beautifully, Every letter perfectly formed." (42-43)

This passage shows that Mrs. Manresa feels envious of William Dodge's "perfectly formed" handwriting, which she considers an aesthetic ideal for writing. Jokingly

reproaching her own “huge” and “clumsy” handwriting, Mrs. Manresa identifies a delicate, and refined shape as the standard of beauty. Elsewhere the narrator implies an entwined tendency with her desire for visual perfection. Mrs. Manresa dreads the waste of “a single drop” of sensation: “Why waste sensation, she seemed to ask, why waste a single drop that can be pressed out of this ripe, this melting, this adorable world? Then she drank” (39). Through the description of Mrs. Manresa, Woolf refers to the triple aspects of these writers’ dilemmas: aesthetic enchantment, horror of waste, and consumption of beauty. Depicted as a viewer enchanted by visual perfection, Mrs. Manresa is at once presented as a “consumer” of beauty, as implied in her “drinking” sensations.

Insofar as writers want to shape a figure’s beauty, their act of making cannot but entail the waste of words, emotions, and feelings. For them, all signs and forms will fail to express the original in the referent, which generates a profusion of meanings and sensations. While they sought to explore the essence of the referent, some deformities may appear on the surface of texts. The texts contain such “wasteful” signs as fragments, surplus emotion, and word-residues. Teeming with waste, however, the deformed body of texts becomes the tissue precipitating the revelation of the other’s singularity. This is what happens in the works of Lawrence, Spark, and Woolf, who luxuriously spent their feelings, emotions and words for the beloved and for their arts in challenging the notion of beauty as utility.

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